



THE HISTORY OF BUDDHISM

GB 405 E



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Translated by

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FOREWORD

The course “The History of Buddhism GB 405E” provides information about ancient India in terms of the different religious beliefs subscribed by the people of ancient India before the happening of Buddhism. It provides information about Buddhism during the Lord Buddha’s time, the change in religious beliefs of the Indian people in those days, the growth and decline of Buddhism, and the propagation of Buddhism in the past up until the present days. The information provided in this course will allow the student to gain a good understanding of the history of Buddhism and appreciate why it is so important to help protect and preserve the Lord Buddha’s Teachings for as long as possible.

The preparation of this course material has been a team effort. It is possible that even after many rounds of editing; the material may still contain mistakes. The Committee hopes that it will receive comments and feedback which will allow it to further improve upon this course material.

The Committee

June, B.E. 2550

COURSE SYLLABUS

1. Description of the Course Material

“The History of Buddhism GB 405E” provides information about the social conditions of ancient India prior to the happening of Buddhism. It also provides information about Buddhism during the Lord Buddha’s time as well as the Lord Buddha’s history, monastic governance, the change in religious beliefs of the people in ancient India, the growth and decline of Buddhism after the Lord Buddha’s attainment of Complete Nibbana, and the propagation of Buddhism in the past up until the present days.

2. Course Objectives

1. To enable the student to gain an understanding about the history of Buddhism, the different events that occurred, and the growth and decline of Buddhism.
2. To enable the student to get the most out of this course by applying what he has learnt in his personal life.
3. To enable the student to see the examples and the conduct of Buddhists in the past especially the way they had dedicated their lives to the Buddhist Cause. It is hoped that these fine examples will inspire the student to help protect and preserve Buddhism so that it can be around for a very long time to come.

3. Topics Covered in the Course

Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 2 Ancient Indian Society

Chapter 3 India during the Lord Buddha’s Time

Chapter 4 Buddhism after the Lord Buddha’s Attainment of Complete Nibbana

Chapter 5 Buddhism in Asia

Chapter 6 Buddhism in the West

Chapter 7 Conclusion

METHOD OF STUDY

1. Preparation for Self-Learning

In order to achieve the objectives of the course, the student should follow the steps for studying each chapter as follows.

- a. Spend an hour each day on the course material and try to finish each chapter within one to two weeks.
- b. Complete the pre-test provided at the beginning of each chapter so that the student can gauge his existing knowledge of the subject matter. Complete the exercises provided for the chapter at the scheduled time. At the end of the chapter, the student should assess his/her comprehension of the material covered by completing the test.
- c. Spend time on other learning tools especially the long-distance learning provided through satellite as detailed in 5.

2. Self-Evaluation before and after Each Chapter

The student should complete the pre-test before beginning each chapter in order to gauge his knowledge of the subject matter. The student should also complete the test at the end of each chapter. Completion of the test will allow the student to know how well he has learnt the material covered in the chapter; and whether he/she is ready to proceed to the next chapter. The test score should be at least 80%. Self-evaluation would be meaningful only if it is carried out honestly.

3. The Course Book

The student should first go over the layout of each chapter in terms of its topics, concepts, and objectives before proceeding with the detailed study. After having finished reading the entire chapter, the student should write down its main points and complete the exercises provided at the end of each chapter. The exercises will help the student to evaluate how well he has comprehended the material covered so that he can apply what he has learnt to his daily life. Therefore, the student should not wait until the last minute to do all of the exercises because such practice is missing the point.

4. Completing the Assignments

The student should write down the main points of each subject and complete all of the exercises provided at the end of each chapter. The assignments are an important part of the coursework.

5. Long-Distance Learning via Satellite and Other Media

The Dhamma study for the Environment Foundation broadcasts its programs via satellite 24 hours a day. Each program aims to give the general public practical information that helps promote morality. There are different programs that can help the student with this course such as Buddhist Words, the Law of Kamma, Meditation for Beginners, Luang Por's Answers, Life in the Round of Rebirth, Dhamma for the People, etc. Additional learning can be obtained through E-learning which is provided by DOU. For more details of these learning tools, please contact DOU's coordination center.

6. Attending the Inner Dreams Kindergarten Program

The student can learn about how to apply the Lord Buddha's Teachings to his daily life through real life examples by attending the Inner Dreams Kindergarten. This valuable program is broadcasted via satellite every Monday to Saturday from 7 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. (Thai time). There are also reruns of the program as posted in the broadcasting schedule. The student can request the broadcasting schedule from the DOU Coordination Center.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 What Is the Definition of History?
What Is the History of Buddhism?
- 1.2 Why Must We Learn about History?
Why Must We Learn about the History of Buddhism?
- 1.3 How to Learn about History
How to Learn about the History of Buddhism

CONCEPTS

1. History has two meanings: a) all the events that actually happened in the past; and b) recorded history. Recorded history is the work of historians who discover certain past events through historical evidences, analyses, and interpretations.

Therefore, the history of Buddhism means all the events concerning Buddhism that happened in the past. And it also means Buddhism's recorded history.

2. We study history in order to learn from it and to use the knowledge gained to create growth and progress in the present. Knowledge about history also helps us among other things to predict what is likely to happen in the future.
3. To gain the most benefit from studying history in general and the history of Buddhism in particular, at least three criteria must be met. These include eagerness, understanding, and memorization. It is also helpful to keep in mind each historian's viewpoint and objective so that we can better understand his work.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to answer the questions "What is the definition of history?" and "What is the history of Buddhism?"
2. To enable the student to understand the reasons for studying history in general and the history of Buddhism in particular.
3. To enable the student to know how to study history and the history of Buddhism and apply what he has learnt in his daily life.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 What Is the Definition of History?

The student may think that the answer is obvious and the question ought not to be asked at all. And yet it may surprise the student to learn that the answer to this question is different depending on the person answering it. In other words, different people have a different answer to this question, and even historians themselves do not give the same answer to this question.

Professor Dr. Niti Iaosriwong said that history is the study of humanity or it is the study of a particular society from its past to its present and into the future. The study employs what is termed “the historical method”.

Dr. Serbsang Promboon said that history has two meanings. He said that in the broadest sense, history means all of humanity’s past experiences. He also said that history means the re-writing of certain past events and past experiences deemed important by the historians. They do this by carrying out the necessary research and analysis, and concluding their work by interpreting all the existing evidences.

In the Thai version of Wikipedia, the definition of history is given as the study of humanity’s history which includes written records of past human societies.

Associate Professor Nantana Kapilakarn said that history is the branch of knowledge which studies the past in a systematic manner. She said that history is an integral part of every branch of knowledge, for no branch of knowledge can exist without history. In the study of law, one must learn how the different cases were judged in the past. In medicine, one must learn about the symptoms of different diseases and the way diseases were cured in the past. In fact, the different branches of knowledge should be called, for example, the history of philosophy, the history of social studies, the history of agriculture, etc. Moreover, history is not merely the study of history textbooks, since unrecorded history far outweighs recorded history by ten thousand, one hundred thousand, or even one million times.

From these definitions, it can be concluded that history has two meanings.

- 1) History means all of the events that happened in the past. These include all of the things that human beings had done, all of the ideas that human beings had had as well as natural occurrences which had an effect on humanity.
- 2) History means events in the past which have been researched, analyzed, interpreted, and written down by historians because they deem these events to be meaningful and significant.

History in both meanings begins with events or human actions that are not only multitudinous but happening all the time and most are forgotten or pass by unnoticed. Therefore, history requires recorders, observers, and individuals who make sure that certain evidences are left behind. Such evidences may be sacred texts, books, paintings, ancient remains, ancient relics, chronicles, stone tablets, etc. Once these evidences are available, it remains for historians to collect, check, consider, contemplate, and interpret them based on the historians' knowledge and experiences before writing the stories down.

But there is one thing to bear in mind. Each day, human beings perform a large number of deeds and no one can make an exact record of what took place in the past. Therefore, what is written down is only 1/100th or 1/1000th of all the things that have happened. Moreover, what is written down may not be the most accurate or the most important but it is merely the relationship between past events and the historian's interpretation of them. A recorded event is not static but can be changed with each new finding and if the new finding carries a lot of weight, it may change the course of history altogether.

What Is the History of Buddhism?

The history of Buddhism means the events concerning Buddhism which have taken place in the past up to the present and these events have been researched, analyzed, interpreted based on each historian's personal knowledge and experience, and written down for the people of future generations.

In studying history, the student should bear in mind that the interpretation of each past event by different historians may very well be quite different. Take for example, the subject of the correct Buddhist Era. Tens of theories have been proposed by historians and one cannot help but wonder which theory is correct. The student needs to exercise impartiality in this case, for it is normal during the course of history study that certain events in the past cannot be completely and accurately known. This does not mean that history is altogether inaccurate because much of recorded history is based on clear-cut evidences that are unanimously accepted by historians.

1.2 Why Must We Learn about History?

Some students may wonder why we must learn about history at all when history is about people, places, and events in the past. Why should we waste our time going back to the past when we should be going forward instead? Many historians have provided a similar answer to these questions. Some say we learn about history because it can teach us many lessons. Some say we can use the knowledge gained about the past as building blocks of new knowledge. Some say we can better anticipate the course of the future through the course of history.

1.2.1 We Learn about History Because It Can Teach Us Many Lessons.

It has been said that history repeats itself. In other words, what happened in the past often happens in the present as well as in the future but the place, the people, and the scene are different. For example, there were wars in the past, there are wars now, and there is a real possibility that there will be wars in the future. The rise and fall of powerful nations and natural disasters such as the Tsunami happened in the past, are happening now and will also happen in the future.

Since history repeats itself, it behooves us to make a thorough study the different events that happened in the past so that we can understand what caused them to happen, how we can prevent them from happening again, and what lessons can be learnt from these events. Past human experiences can serve as the roadmap for all humanity as stated by the British historian, Professor Arnold Toynbee.

1.2.2 We Can Use the Knowledge Gained about the Past as Building Blocks of New Knowledge

Humanity has made great advancement especially in the field of science and technology. Human beings can travel to the moon, fly like a bird in an airplane, communicate with each other across distances through the phone and the Internet, etc. Such advancement is not the result of the work of scientists in the present days alone but it is based on the scientific knowledge accumulated throughout the course of human history and improved upon by today's scientists. Even the brilliant theoretical physicist Albert Einstein began his extraordinary career by studying the information and theories discovered by mathematicians of the past.

Einstein was an enthusiastic student since childhood. He studied textbooks on mathematics, physics, astronomy, etc., on his own and addressed his questions to those knowledgeable in the respective fields. While he was attending the Swiss Federal Polytechnic, he wanted to read every book in the library before he graduated. Existing books on whatever subject make it possible for people in later generations not to have to “re-invent the wheel”.

1.2.3 We Can Better Anticipate the Course of the Future through the Course of History

One historian said that before we can step into the future, we need to first unlock the key to the past because the past, the present, and the future are connected together. The past is the cause, and the present is the effect. The present is the cause and the future is the effect. In other words, the present is the result of the past and the future is the result of the present. Therefore, if we understand the past and the present, we will be able to look into the future more clearly. The breadth and depth of knowledge gained about the past will make us better understand the present and in such a way that we can predict the course of the future more accurately. This is like shooting an arrow where the further back the bowstring is drawn, the further the arrow will travel. A person who can anticipate the course of the future clearly has an added advantage and a better chance at meeting with success. When we can anticipate the direction in which the future will take, we can be better prepared at taking on future events.

In business, this ability to anticipate future events is called “corporate vision”. Corporate vision refers to the category of intentions that are broad, all inclusive, and forward thinking. Bill Gates is one individual who has met with exceptional success in business. He was ranked the richest man in the world for many years in a row. When he first started out in the computer business, he was of the opinion that what is important in the Information Age is not the hardware but the software. He had this opinion in spite of the fact that IBM had announced to the world that they would be the leader in computer hardware. What Bill Gates envisioned for the future was a computer on every desk and in every home and Microsoft would provide the software for all of those computers. As a result, Microsoft started to seriously work on software development. What happened later proved Bill Gates right. In the year 2538 B.E., Microsoft Company controlled the personal computer software completely. The operating software “Windows” was installed in nearly 90% of all the existing computers while IBM’s operating system “OS/2” was installed in only 5 – 6 % of the computers. By the time a giant like IBM realized what was happening, it was already too late. The company had lost a total of 16 billion dollars and nearly went out of business.

One may ask what caused Bill Gates to have such a long-range and accurate vision. The answer can be found in his relentless search for basic knowledge in the present lifetime as well as the Generosity Perfection and Wisdom Perfection he had accumulated in his previous lifetimes.

James Wallace said that Bill Gates’ reading habit is just as intense as his craze for the computer. He had gone through the biography of so many individuals such as Franklin Roosevelt, Napoleon, etc. He read these books in order to truly understand what history had to teach him.

Why Must We Learn about the History of Buddhism?

We must learn about the history of Buddhism in order to garner lessons learnt about the growth and decline of Buddhism in the past so that growth in Buddhism can be ensured in the present and in the future.

The teaching technique employed by the Lord Buddha uses lessons learnt about the past to correct the shortcomings of the present. The Lord Buddha does this by recalling a particular disciple's previous lives so that the disciple would know how to make improvements in his current lifetime. This Buddha-Method allowed the disciples to gain a deep understanding of what the Lord Buddha was teaching. As a result, many were able to practice His teachings until they attained Arahantship. The different Dhamma Principles taught by the Lord Buddha are not new but they are derived from different forms of history such as a particular disciple's previous lives, the way the Lord Buddha pursued Perfections in His previous lives as a Bodhisatta, etc.

Even such a profound Dhamma Principle as "The Law of Causation" or "Paticcasamuppada" is not new but it is taught by every Lord Buddha that has happened to date. Our Lord Gautama Buddha discovers these Dhamma Principles by practicing meditation until He attains Self-Enlightenment. These Dhamma Principles have already existed whether Self-Enlightenment occurs or not. In the Paccaya Sutta, the Lord Buddha said, "Whether the different Tathagatas happen or not, all the elements such as Dhammathiti, Dhammaniyama, and Idappacaya have already existed. The Tathagata attains Self-Enlightenment; hence, gains knowledge about these elements. Having gained such knowledge, He teaches it to others."

1.3 How to Learn about History

How can we learn about history so that we can gain the maximum benefit from it? There are two ways to do this: We can learn about history as a historian; and we can learn about history as an ordinary individual. To learn about history as a historian requires quite a few steps. One must postulate a theory, gather relevant information, analyze the information, and write down one's findings. To learn about history as an ordinary individual requires one to study the work of different historians. And to gain the maximum benefit from learning history, at least three factors must be in place.

1.3.1 Learn It with Interest

Many students think of history as being boring because they cannot see how anything can be gained from learning it and they usually do only what is needed to pass the history exam. They do not study it with interest. As a result, very little benefit can be gained and no lessons can be derived from it. One should be interested in learning about history in the same way that the novice monk Rahula was interested in gaining as much Dhamma knowledge as possible with each passing day. He wanted to learn as many different Dhamma topics in a day as the number of grains of sand he could hold in his cupped hand.

1.3.2 Learn It by Using a Combination of Memory and Understanding

To derive the maximum benefit from learning history, a combination of memory and understanding is needed. If we can memorize something but do not understand it, we will not be able to apply it in our daily life. Mr. Charnvit Kasetsiri said, "Learning history is not about memorizing everything but it is more about understanding the profound meaning of what we have memorized."

1.3.3 Learn It by Being Cognizant of the Historian's Viewpoint and Objective

Recorded history results from the historian's interpretation of the information gained. Therefore, history is not about what happened in the past alone but it involves the historian's viewpoint on the particular event as well. A student of history must therefore learn about the author who wrote that particular piece of history. A historian's viewpoint is shaped by his environment to a more or less extent. His written work may well be influenced by the time and place where he spends his life. The study of history must go hand in hand with the knowledge about each historian's attitude and personality.

1.3.4 Apply What We Have Learnt in Our Daily Life

To derive the maximum benefit from studying history, we must always bear in mind how we can apply what we have learnt in our daily life so that in the face of problems, we will be able to apply all the things that we have learnt to help solve our problems in a timely manner. In other words, we must learn to turn all head knowledge into practical knowledge.

How to Learn about the History of Buddhism

The same principles used in learning history apply to learning about the history of Buddhism. Moreover, we learn about the history of Buddhism so that we can deeply appreciate the efforts put into preserving the Lord Buddha’s Teachings by members of the Buddhist Communities all throughout the ages. These worthy individuals have kept the Dhamma for us to guide us in our lives. And it is now up to us to help preserve the Dhamma for future generations.

ASSIGNMENTS

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

ANCIENT INDIAN SOCIETY

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 2

ANCIENT INDIAN SOCIETY

- 2.1 The Geography and History of Ancient India
- 2.2 The Origin and Evolution of Brahmanism

CONCEPTS

1. India is the origin of the ancient Indus Civilization. And its rich history spans more than 5,000 years. India is a subcontinent the shape of an up-side-down triangle located in the south of Asia. Given the varied topography and climate, India became the land of diversity in terms of lifestyle, social system, and religion.
2. The history of India began with the Indus Valley Civilization around two to three thousand years before the Buddhist Era. The center of this early urban civilization was the cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro. The decline and collapse of this civilization occurred with the invasion of the Aryans. The Aryans had later developed for themselves a new and strong civilization and the original cultures of the Indus Valley Civilization were assimilated.
3. After the invasion, the Aryans had set up a new social system by dividing people into four different castes depending on their economic status and responsibility. The initial purpose of the caste system was to separate themselves from the indigenous people whom they viewed as being low class individuals. This social system later developed into a very strict caste system. In this social system, Brahmin was considered to be the highest caste, since it was believed that the Brahmins could communicate directly with the gods. They were also the people that led the sacrificial rituals in order to appease the gods whom they believed to have control over nature. Ancient beliefs and practices were later developed into Brahmanism where everything is based on the Vedas and Brahma is believed to be the highest god. Adherents of Brahmanism live their lives by the Four Ashrams Philosophy in order to attain Moksha or emancipation.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to learn about the geography and history of ancient India.
2. To enable the student to learn about Brahmanism and how it has exerted a great influence on Indian society for thousands of years.

ANCIENT INDIAN SOCIETY

2.1 The Geography and History of Ancient India

India is an important country in Asia and its history dates back thousands of years. India is the birthplace of ancient civilization and its civilization is well-known all throughout the world. Archaeologists have postulated that northern India had had contact with the Mesopotamia civilization that emerged along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Northwest India was once colonized by Alexander the Great of Macedonia (356 to 323 B.C.).

2.1.1 The Geography of India

The territory of ancient India was very extensive and it included what are now India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. India is a subcontinent located in South Asia. It has the shape of an up-side-down triangle the size of Europe. It is bounded by the Indian Ocean on the south, the Arabian Sea on the southwest, and the Bay of Bengal on the southeast; it shares land borders with Pakistan to the west, China, Nepal, and Bhutan to the northeast, and Burma and Bangladesh to the east. A great arc of mountains, consisting of the Himalayas, Hindu Kush, and Patkai ranges define the northern Indian subcontinent and separate it from the rest of Asia.

Ancient India can be divided into three regions. These include the Himalayan Region, the Great River Region, and the Southern Plateau Region. Most peaks in the Himalayas remain snowbound during the year. The Himalayan range and the Karokoram range form the highest part of the world. Just to the west and the northwest end of the Karokoram, lies the Hindu Raj range, beyond which is the Hindu Kush range.

Below the mountain ranges lie the Great Plains dominated by three major rivers from west to east, the Indus or Sindhu, the Ganges, and the Brahmaputra. The Himalayan river networks are snow-fed and have a perennial supply throughout the year. These fertile plains have been India's wheat belt and played an important role in supporting the emergence of civilization since ancient times.

The Vindhya Range runs across most of central India, below it are the Central Highlands dominated by the Deccan Plateau which covers most of the Indian peninsula and the Thar Desert. In the Thar Desert, temperatures can range from 0° C in the winter to over 50° C in the summer. Rainfall is precarious and erratic.

In the lowlands along the rivers where crops are grown, in some years, the rivers overflow and cause the death of hundreds or thousands of people. In other years, they can dry up completely during the dry season.

With the subcontinent being divided by mountain ranges, rivers, and deserts, communication and travels became difficult. As a result, India has become the land of varied peoples where more than a hundred different languages are spoken. Northern India and Southern India are so vastly different in terms of skin color, language, fauna and flora that they may very well be two separate countries. These differences made it difficult for ancient India to be a unified country except for the period when Asoka the Great had sovereignty over most of the Indian subcontinent.

2.1.2 The Origin of the Indus Civilization

Archaeologists first postulated that the history of India began about a thousand years before the Buddhist Era. However, archeological digs in the towns along the Indus River, which were the birthplace of Indian Civilization, revealed that ancient Indian civilization had its birth during the Bronze Age around 2,800 years before the Buddhist Era. The timeline of the Indus Valley Civilization coincided with the river civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Civilization in Mesopotamia was found along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers whereas that of Egypt was along the Niles.

The word “Sindhu” in Sanskrit means river. The Persians, who were India’s neighbor to the west, could not pronounce the “s”-sound and replaced the “s”-sound with the “h”-sound. Therefore, Sindhu became Hindu. When India was colonized by the British Empire, the name was changed to Indus which was its ancient Greek name. Ancient Greek in turn had its roots in the Persian language. Therefore, two new words were created: “Indus” and “India”. Indus was used to call the river whereas India was used to call the country. India used to be called “Bharatavarsa” which was the name of the first Indian king according to the sacred text, “Mahabharata”. India was also called “Hindustan” by the Persians.

The Indus Valley Civilization is also called the “Harappa Civilization” by archeologists. It was discovered accidentally in 1856 during the Lahor-Multan railroad survey. The archeologist, Sir John Marshall carried out the official dig and he discovered the ancient ruins of two cities. One was called Harappa located in Punjabi Province and the other was called Mohenjo-daro located in Sind Province. These two cities are postulated to be the cradle of the Indus Valley Civilization. Later, the ruins of more than 2,500 cities were also discovered.

Repeated excavation of these sites to about ten meters down revealed an ancient city with its own unique civilization and an impressive, organized layout. Houses were constructed of the same type and shape of bricks. The city contained fortifications, granaries, reservoirs, and a roadside drainage system. Roads were laid with bricks and connected to each other in a network.

Archeologists agree that the first city of the Indus Valley Civilization was built around 5,000 years ago and it had some form of centralized authority. Science and the arts were developed to a certain extent but no written records of the period had ever been found. This makes it difficult to pinpoint the exact timeline of this river civilization, and its age has to be estimated from its ruins and other artifacts.

No one knows for sure when the Indus Valley Civilization ended but archaeologists are of the opinion that the civilization flourished for about 1,000 years before it came to an abrupt end for no apparent reason. Some archaeologists postulated that the civilization underwent a decline because of droughts due to the disappearance of substantial portions of the Ghaggar Hakra river system as well as a decline in trade with Egypt and Mesopotamia.

2.1.3 Indo-Aryan Migration

Historians believe that the Austro-Asiatic people were the earliest inhabitants of India. They belong to the Nigroid race with dark-brown to blue-black skin and frizzy black hair. They hunt for a living using poison darts. People of the Nigroid race had later become integrated with the people of the Mongoloid race that migrated from the northeast and the result is the Proto-Australoid ethnic group or Nisada.¹

Sometime later, another ethnic group with a dark complexion, frizzy hair, protruding eyes, medium height, migrated from the Mediterranean area into Persia. They eventually started the Indus Valley Civilization. They are known as the Dravidian race or Dravid in Sanskrit.²

Today, historians agree that the Dravidians were the people who created ancient civilizations. They were the first people to settle and built their nations along such important rivers as the Niles, the Tigris-Euphrates, the Sindhu or Indus, etc. Therefore, Egyptian civilization, Mesopotamia civilization, and Indus Valley Civilization had all been developed by the Dravidians.

The Dravidians later became integrated with the Proto-Australoid people who were the earlier inhabitants of ancient India and the resulting race called itself “Milakkha”.³

Around 1,000 to 1,500 years before the Buddhist Era, a great change occurred when the Dravidians were defeated by the Aryans who invaded their territory from the northwest. The Aryans crossed the Hindu Kush through the Khyber Pass into India and Afghanistan and captured the northern part and most of the northeastern part as well as the central part of India. They drove the Dravidians who were not skilled at doing battles from their territory. One group fled to the east toward the Ganges and beyond Assam Province. Another group fled to the south of India and went across the channel to Sri Lanka.⁴ After their victory, the Aryans called the Dravidians by the degrading name of “Dasyus” which in Sanskrit means a slave, a servant, or a low class person.

¹ Nisada means a fool and is used contemptuously by the Aryans to call the people of the Proto-Australoid group.

² Dravid means southerners. The Aryans gave them this name after they were pushed to the south by the Aryans.

³ Milakkha means a gloomy person or a dark-complexion person. Its original meaning is “hill-tribe” but the Aryans used the word to mean a primitive person or an evil person.

⁴ Samak Buravat, **Brahmin Philosophy during the Lord Buddha’s time**, 2516 B.E., p. 66

The Aryans belong to the Caucasoid race and came originally from the steppe in southern Russia. They are tall and fair with an oval face and a high bridge nose. Aryan means civilized. The Aryans could tame the wild horses plentiful in the steppe and train them to pull carts. Besides having horses which provided fast transportation, they also invented light weight chariots pulled by two horses that could move quickly. They invented wheels complete with hub and spokes as well as chassis while the Sumerian Civilization was still using wheels made of planks of wood joined together and drawn by donkeys.

The Aryans were nomads and went from place to place in the steppe with their herds. They were not skilled at agriculture and did very little of it but they were very good at waging battles and in their culture, warriors were admired.

The migration of Aryans occurred along two routes. One group went to the southwest and later became the Europeans' ancestors. Another group went to the southeast toward Persia and India as described earlier.⁵ Migration of the Aryans into India occurred in waves which lasted about a hundred years. The end of their migration occurred around 800 years before the Buddhist Era.

After the Aryans settled in India, they did not rebuild the Indus Valley Civilization which was undergoing a fast decline but they took over the forests, the rivers, and the seas and earned their living by raising farm animals. The cultures and agrarian lifestyle of the indigenous Dravidians were assimilated as the Aryans went about creating their own civilization. During this period, there were altogether three civilizations.

- 1) The original Dravidian Civilization
- 2) The Aryan Civilization
- 3) The combination of Dravidian Civilization and Aryan Civilization

One religious historian, Venerable Mahasomjin Sammapanno points out that the civilization that has flourished and continued to the present is the third one because it has the right proportion of each of the first two civilizations.

⁵ According to Etymologists, the ancestors of the people in Europe and India were Aryans because the language used was based on the Indo-European language which was the original language of the Aryans.

2.2 The Origin and Evolution of Brahmanism

During the course of Indian history, Brahmanism has played a major role in shaping its people's religion and cultures. It is believed that the Brahmin culture and tradition as well as the Brahmin philosophy arose out of the combination of Aryan culture and the higher Dravidian culture. This combination of culture evolved with the periodical invasions of the Aryans.

2.2.1 The Vedic Period: About 800 to 300 Years before the Buddhist Era

The Origin of the Original Caste System

After the Aryans migrated to India, they settled in the northwestern part of India above the Indus River. The Aryans were not a primitive people and their culture had already been developed to a certain extent. However, theirs was not an urbanized society and centralized authority did not exist in the same way that it did for the Dravidians who created the Indus Valley Civilization. The Aryans lived in tribal groups. Each tribal group was headed by a chief who was called "Raja". The Raja position was passed on from father to son. The Raja did not have absolute power, since most of the power was in the hand of the tribal board.

Before entering India, the Aryans already had a caste system to distinguish the ruling class from the other members of the tribe. There were also priests who performed religious rites, since the Aryans worshipped the many different gods associated with nature.

The Aryans saw how the indigenous Dravidians were dark-complected and they did not want their race to lose its purity through interracial marriages. Therefore, the Aryans shunned the dark-complected Dravidians as well as interracial marriages.

These racial problems caused by prejudice brought about the caste system. The original purpose of the caste system was to categorize people according to their economic status and occupation.

- 1) Brahmin: the priests who perform religious rites
- 2) Kshatriya: warriors, nobility, landowners
- 3) Vaishya: farmers, traders, artisans
- 4) Sudra: slaves, tenant farmers, servants

It should not be surprising then that the indigenous Dravidians and Proto-Australoids should be placed in the Sudra caste. After their defeat, the Aryans treated them contemptuously and reduced them to the status of slaves and servants. And they were called "Dasyus" which means a low class person.

In a way, the original caste system could be considered a very useful governing tool. However, later deviation of the caste system specifically for the self-serving purposes of the Brahmin caste created intense prejudice and the reduction of rights of the lower caste people. Details of the caste system will be presented under the Brahmin Period.

The Vedas

Even before the Aryans migrated to India, they already held a strong belief in the gods of nature. The Aryans believed that Indra created the world; hence, he was the most powerful god. They believed that Indra was also the god of war and it was Indra that helped the Aryan troops defeat the indigenous people of ancient India. Besides Indra, there were other important gods such as Agni, the fire god; Surya, the sun god; Soma, the moon god; Varuna, the rain god; Yama, the god of death and destruction, etc.

The Aryans worshipped the gods of nature because they believed that nature had the power to destroy as well as the power to create phenomena which benefited human beings. They also believed that their departed ancestors lived in a higher realm and they could worship the gods as well as their ancestors by lighting a fire. They believed that the rising smoke could bring their prayers to their gods. Another ritual to communicate with the gods and to ask for favors from them is fire-worshipping or the burning of sacrifices.

The Dravidians worshipped nature but more in terms of earth, water, wind, and fire which were beneficial to human beings. The Aryans incorporated the Dravidians' beliefs into their own and this gave birth to a new religion that was later developed into Brahmanism. Brahmanism has been the dominant religion of the Indian subcontinent up until the present days.

The reason this new religion was called Brahmanism is that the religion is studied and passed on by the Brahmin caste. Therefore, the Brahmin caste had to be respected by the people of other castes including kings because it was believed that the Brahmins could communicate directly with the gods; hence, they knew how to perform god-pleasing rituals.

The offering of sacrifices has always been part of the rituals performed by the Brahmins. However, initially, they made an offering of butter, cheese, oil, honey, and cane juice. There was no offering of live animals just yet. It was not until sometime later that the ritual was changed to include the offering of animals and human beings. The people of India in those days believed that the offering of live animals and people gave them longevity, material wealth, children, honor, and fame.⁶

⁶ Juntaratchanun Singhatat, Master Degree thesis, "**Comparative Study of the Psychological Concepts of Theravada Buddhism and Indian Mahayana Buddhism**", Mahidol University, 2539 B.E., p. 13

Brahmanism as developed by the Aryans was full of hymns of praises for the gods and texts on rituals and services as well as philosophical stories believed to be the words of the gods. It was believed that the Brahmins received these words from the mouth of Brahma whom they believed to be the creator of the world and all living beings. Later, these incantations were categorized and recorded in ancient Sanskrit called the Veda.

Since then, believers of Brahmanism view the Veda as their sacred text born of the gods. The Veda is believed to be the truth and the core of Brahmanism. Even the written words are worshipped as gods themselves, especially any phrase that begins with the sound “Om” which is believed to contain the energy, power, and secret of the Veda.

The Veda was based on the Rigveda which contains hymns of praises for the gods and prayers offered to the gods. There were altogether 1,028 stanzas and these were estimated to be about 3,000 years old. The Rigveda contains stories about the Aryan gods and how Indra helped them to defeat the Dasys whom they saw as the enemy of the gods. The Rigveda is considered to be the oldest and most important sacred text in the world. It reveals the thoughts and beliefs of the Aryans in ancient times.

Later, the Brahmins who performed the rituals and services wanted to select only certain hymns from the Rigveda as well as rearranging them for the purpose of singing the praises of the god, Sama. They worshipped Sama with the Sama juice extracted from the mountain Sama tree grown on the Himalayas. The text, which describes the worship of Sama with the Sama juice extract and all the hymns, is called the Samveda.

Sometime later, the Aryans dominated the southeast region along the state of Ambala all the way to the state of Punjab located on the Ganges and the northern part of the Yamuna River. The Brahmins selected the mantras needed to perform the sacrifices from the Rigveda and re-arranged them into pairs and suites making it easier to perform religious rituals. This new text became the Yajurveda and it contains information about the performance of rituals.

The Rigveda, the Samaveda, and the Yajurveda became the Three Vedas. During the period that the Brahmins were powerful, the Three Vedas were given absolute power and every Brahmin must respect their authority. To be scholarly, a Brahmin had to be well versed in the Three Vedas. Therefore, the Three Vedas were the sacred texts which had to be learnt by every Brahmin scholar.

Near the end of the Vedas period, Brahmanism was threatened by other religions and the Brahmins collected all of the black arts together in order to convince believers to return to Brahmanism. This collection became the fourth Veda and it was called the Atharveda. It consists of old incantations that used to be recited to remove calamities, cure diseases, prolong life, expel ghosts, give tattoos, make love potions, remove ill fortune, remove jinxes and other threats. In addition, there was information about the art of love-making.⁷

⁷ Samak Buravat, **Brahmin Philosophy during the Lord Buddha's time**, 2516 B.E., p. 68-71

The Vedas were the most sacred and the most important texts which provided strict guidelines for the Aryans' religious and personal life. Although written words were available in those days but the Aryans still preferred to learn and memorize the sacred texts. This oral tradition was continued out of their deep respect for the Vedas. In chanting the stanzas, pronunciation of the alphabets and the vowels had to be exact and correct and pauses had to be at the right places. Otherwise, the person performing the rituals would earn retribution or risk not having his prayers answered.

2.2.2 The Brahmana Period⁸, About 300 to 100 Years before the Buddhist Era

The Origin of Brahma and the Concept of Trimurti

If the student should do search on ancient Indian literature such as the Rigveda or other Vedas, the student would not find any mention of the god called "Brahma". The reason is that in the early period of the Vedas, there was no mention of Brahma.

The first mention of "Brahma" in the Indian literature is found at the end of the Vedas Period in the Shatapatha Brahmana which is around 2,600 to 2,800 years ago. It was mentioned in this text that Brahma is the creator of fire and the entire universe. Brahma is an ideal god which has no form or gender.⁹ He has a more elevated status than Indra who the Brahmins used to regard as being the highest god. However, Indra lost his popularity at a later time because among other things he became drunk from the Soma juice; he became promiscuous; he lost the battle against the Asura, etc. As a result, the Brahmins had to create a new god that is formless to replace the problematic Indra.

Having created Brahma as the supreme god, the Brahmins had next to create the story about how Brahma created the world. And the story went, in the beginning, there was emptiness. As time passed, an egg-like mass was formed and from the egg emerged Brahma. He then caused the egg to break into two halves. The top half became heaven and the bottom half became the earth. Brahma dwelled in heaven and he created the sun, the moon, the stars, the rain, the storms, the fire, and filled the entire earth with living beings. He could dictate the lives of his creatures to be as he wished. This process is called "Brahma-Destined". In other words, they believed that each person's life is pre-destined by Brahma since the day he was born. It is said that each person has his destiny written on his forehead six days after he was born. And this destiny was handwritten by Brahma. Therefore, no one could escape the power of Brahma. Therefore, Brahma was supreme in that he created the universe and everything in it and he is also the father of every god and every deva.

Initially, the concept of the formless Brahma was well accepted. However, as time passed, believers wondered how they could worship Brahma if Brahma was formless. Therefore, the Brahmins had to get to work solving the problem by creating a Brahma having four faces. These four faces are turned toward the four cardinal points as he sits above the world. This Brahma was pure and asexual. Therefore, he knew peace and supreme happiness.¹⁰

⁸ The Vedas Commentary is called Brahmana.

⁹ Visut Busayakul, **the Four Faces of Brahma**, 2549 B.E., p. 4

¹⁰ Siriwat Kamvansa, **Buddhism in India**, 2534 B.E. , p. 14

However, as time passed, Brahma's attributes became more and more human-like but he still had power over human beings. Now he was a male with seven faces. He had feelings such as love and affection the way a human being does. After a while, believers began to feel disenchanted with Brahma in the same way that they had been with Indra. Therefore, it was up to the Brahmins to create two more gods who were equal to Brahma and the three gods were called "Trimurti". All three were regarded as powerful, supreme, and eternal. The Brahmins also assigned different responsibilities to these gods.

- 1) Brahma: He is the creator and he dwells above the earth.
- 2) Vishnu: He is the preserver and he dwells in the south where the sea is.
- 3) Shiva: He is the destroyer and he dwells in a place north of the Himalayas.

The Brahmins said that Vishnu and Shiva came from Brahma.

With Trimurti came the belief that all things came from the one element called Brahman. Brahman could grow and expand. But there could only be one supreme god. This belief caused Brahmanism to split into two different schools later on. Those who were devoted to Vishnu formed Vaishnavism and those who were devoted to Shiva formed Saivism.

Each of the schools worshipped its own god as being supreme and the role of Brahma became all but forgotten. Nowadays, there are hardly any images of Brahma in Indian temples. In some temples, prominent images of Shiva and Vishnu can be seen but only a small image of Brahma appears in a tiny space cut into the temple wall.

The continuous creation of gods is an important and unique characteristic of Brahmanism. Therefore, the Brahmana Period is the period where human beings created gods and not the other way around. During this period, believers emphasized the superficial aspect of religion rather than the teachings contained in the Vedas. Believers were more interested in miracles, magic incantations, and the various branches of the black art as recorded in the fourth Veda called the Atharveda.

Even the concept of Trimurti arose from the need to gather together the miraculous powers of the three gods and the concept of the creator (Brahma), the preserver (Vishnu), and the destroyer (Shiva) emphasized the miraculous powers of the gods rather than the learning of the teachings contained in the Vedas. The shift in emphasis finally led to the decline of Brahmanism in later times.¹¹ It also caused a great change in the teachings and Brahmanism was eventually transformed into Hinduism in an effort to remain attractive to as many believers as possible.

¹¹ Duangtida Ramate, **The Great Civilizations of Asia**, India-China, 2549 B.E., p. 58

Development of the Caste System

The caste system of the Vedic Period became more distinct after the war between the Aryans and the Dravidians had ended. The interpretation of the caste system as written in the Vedas arose principally out of societal necessity to meet the demand of the people in power at the time. Initially, interpretation of the caste system was carried out by the Aryans who won the war. They wanted to make a clear division between the Aryans and the Dravidians. It was an effort aimed to preserve the purity of their race. In other words, members of the Brahmin, Kshatriya, and Vaisya castes were Aryans and they were above the dark-complected indigenous people who belonged to the Sudra caste. People of the Sudra caste were servants and slaves.

Later, the caste system was extended to include members of different occupations.¹² It was more the way to categorize people according to their role and occupation. For example, Brahmins were teachers; Kshatriyas fought in battles and protected the country; Vaisyas were traders, and Sudras were farmers and laborers.

Later still, economic and societal growth increased the complexity of the society. The number of occupations had increased in order to meet the demand of society. As a result, more castes were added to the original four. Members of the superior castes tended to take advantage of members of the inferior castes. Initially, members of the Sudra caste that were well- to-do and well-accepted by other members of society could marry members of other castes. However, after the caste system became more convoluted, the status of slaves became more and more degraded until they eventually became the Untouchables. As such, they were forbidden to conduct religious rituals such as cremation. They were not allowed to touch the Vedas. Transgressors would be punished by having their hands and ears cut off.¹³

The intensity of the caste system became overwhelming near the end of the Vedic Period. All the while, the Brahmins claimed to be practicing according to what had been written in the final part of the Rigveda, “Brahma creates human beings to be unequal. And human beings are born from the different parts of Brahma in that the Brahmins are born from Brahma’s head, the Kshatriyas are born from Brahma’s shoulders, the Vaisyas are born from Brahma’s abdomen, and the Sudras are born from Brahma’s feet.”¹⁴ Other texts claimed that the Brahmins are born from Brahma’s mouth, and the Kshatriyas are born from Brahma’s arms.¹⁵

Since human beings are born unequally from the different parts of Brahma, they are predestined by Brahma to belong to a certain caste. Therefore, members of each cast had to adhere strictly to its code of conduct. A person born into a particular caste would remain in that caste for the rest of his life. Intermarriages among members of different castes are forbidden. If intermarriage occurs, the children born of such a marriage would belong outside the caste system called the Untouchables. They would be shunned by society.

¹² Venerable Mahanikorn Suvandi, Master Degree thesis, “**The Analytical Study of the Basic Beliefs in the Caste System of Thai Hindus**”, Mahidol University, 2544 B.E., p.13

¹³ Sirivat Kamvansa, **Buddhism in India**, 2534 B.E. p. 12-13

¹⁴ Promsak Jermsawad, **The Four Faces of Brahma**, 2549 B.E., p. 21

¹⁵ Visut Busayakul, **The Four Faces of Brahma**, 2549 B.E., p. 8

All of these relentless efforts to enforce the caste system stemmed from the fact that the Aryans wanted to make sure that the purity of their race be preserved.¹⁶ Transgressors were considered guilty on the first count as betrayers of their race, and on the second count as violators of the command of the gods. And they would be punished by the gods. This punishment is called “Devadanda” or “Brahmadanda”. Members of the Sudra and Untouchable castes had to unconditionally obey the Brahmins’ orders. Therefore, members of the Sudra caste suffered terribly under this social system. People’s belief in the caste system remains strong in India even now.¹⁷

2.2.3 The Upanishads Period, About 150 to 100 Years before the Buddhist Era

“Brahman” of the Upanishads

Brahmanism had continued to evolve from the Brahmana Period to its third period called the Upanishads Period. This is the period where societal foundation in India had been firmly in place. Religiously, however, believers began to question the potency of making sacrificial offerings. They began to realize that sacrificial offerings could not be used to solve every problem they had and could at best offer only temporary comfort. Therefore, philosophers of this period began to search for answers to such questions as what is life, why are we born, and where do we go after we die.

Conflicts and doubts became increasingly intense and people were gathering in groups to discuss the possible answers to these various questions. The Brahmins no longer commanded their respect. The movement to create new philosophical ideas was led by the Kshatriya caste. On any given day, they might address questions to the Brahmins like, “What gave rise to the world, what gave rise to life, what is Brahma, where do we come from, what makes our existence possible, on what basis were we created.”

Such philosophical questions and answers thought up by different individuals gave rise to interesting conclusions. These were subsequently collected in a text called the Upanishads.¹⁸ It represents the final stage of the development of thought along the teachings contained in the Vedas. Later development of Hindu philosophy was based on the extended version of the Upanishads which is called the Vedanta.¹⁹

No one knew when the Upanishads first appeared, since it contained about a hundred volumes and each volume contained conflicting thoughts and ideas. Hindu philosophers believe the Upanishads to have existed before Buddhism.²⁰ However, there are some who believe that it appeared after Buddhism. They believe it to be the work of the Hindus. It was their attempt to preserve Brahmanism at the time when Buddhism and Jainism were flourishing.²¹

¹⁶ Duangtida Ramate, **The Great Civilizations of Asia, India-China**, 2549 B.E., p. 33

¹⁷ Venerable Udonkanatikarn, **The History of Buddhism in India**, 2534 B.E., p. 32-33

¹⁸ The Upanishads represents profound lessons which are passed from master to pupils.

¹⁹ Vedanta means the uttermost part of the Vedas.

²⁰ Venerable Mahasomjin Sammapanyo, **Buddhist Philosophy, Essence and Development**, 2544 B.E., p. 6

²¹ Sirivat Kamvansa, **Buddhism in India**, 2534 B.E., p. 6

The Upanishads contains profound philosophy which is difficult to understand. This difficulty is exemplified by the new teaching about the ultimate truth called “Brahman.”²²

It was written in the Upanishads that although the Vedas were held as gods’ words, they were actually born of Brahman as his breath. Therefore, Brahman in the Upanishads is much more important than the Vedas as in the sentence, “The person who has the most knowledge of the Vedas cannot be emancipated from suffering because he still has no knowledge of Brahman. On the contrary, if one knows Brahman but does not know the Vedas, one can be emancipated from suffering.”²³

The Upanishads states that Brahman is the only god and the highest god. Everything comes from Brahman and will return to Brahman. An individual person is called Jivataman or Atman and he possesses the Brahman nature. Each person must endeavor to perform the prescribed rituals until he can attain Moksha or emancipation and return to Brahman. In the meantime, he will have to undergo the round of rebirth. Therefore, to return to Brahman, Jivataman must choose to do the things that do not bind him to the world.²⁴

The teaching about Brahman is the Upanishads’ basic principle. The teaching connects human beings to Brahman, human beings to gods, human beings to human beings, and human beings to everything in the universe. “It is impossible for human life to live apart from what goes on in the universe, for human beings are part of the universe.”

The Four Ashrams Philosophy

During the Brahmana Period where sacrificial offering was widely practiced, the Brahmins who performed the rituals and services were held in high regards by the believers. When they encountered a problem, they would go to see a certain Brahmin so that the Brahmin could help alleviate their suffering and cleanse away their sin. Brahmins were regarded as gods’ representatives and they had to perform the rituals correctly so that they could be the believers’ refuge.

The Four Ashrams Philosophy or Aranyaka (lessons in the forest) is part of the Vedas. It refers to the way a Brahmin should live in order to fulfill the purpose of human life.²⁵ The Four Ashrams proceed in steps as follows.

- 1) Brahmacharya or Student: It is the time when a person practices celibacy, and enters a period of study called “Upanayan”. It begins when a person is eight years old. The Brahmin teacher puts on the student the sacred thread called “Yajyopavita”. The student must practice celibacy, obey the teacher, behave appropriately, respect the teacher, and study under the teacher for at least 12 years in order to graduate.

²² Brahman is also called by other names such as Paramatman, Atman

²³ Sumalee Mahanarongchai, **Hindu-Buddhist, Different Views**, 2546 B.E., p. 51

²⁴ Pirapong Sookkaew, **Toward Brahman: Trimurti “Brahma, Shiva, Narai”**, 2548 B.E. , p. 86

²⁵ There are four aspects to life’s purpose: Dhamma (conduct in regards to religion, society, and morality), Attha (material wealth), Kama (happiness and love) and Moksha (emancipation from the round of rebirth).

- 2) Grihastha or Householder: It is the time when a person marries and has at least one child in order to repay his ancestors and prevent his parents from going to the hell realm of "Putta". A person must earn a living to accumulate material wealth. He must follow the rules for householders, and observe all rituals and services.
- 3) Vanaprastha or Hermit: It is the time when as a householder a person has already accumulated material wealth, had children, and passed his material wealth on to his children. The person can now devote more time to spiritual matters, engage in practices of austerity and penance, and go on pilgrimage.
- 4) Sannyasa or Ascetic: A person becomes an ascetic or Sannyasa during the last part of his life in order to seek Moksha. A person is ordained and taught by a guru as to the way of asceticism. To do this, he must leave his wife and children behind in order to take up the religious life in the forest.

The Four Ashrams are the four stages of life practiced by a believer in order to attain the highest goal in Brahmanism which is Moksha. The Four Ashrams exert an influence over people and society and leads to the development of higher morality.²⁶ However, individuals that could practice the Four Ashrams had to belong to the Brahmin caste, the Kshatriya caste, or the Vaisya caste.

During the Brahmana Period, the Four Ashrams were not as earnestly practiced, since the emphasis at the time was placed on making sacrificial offerings, having children, and giving alms. Therefore, Grihastha is the stage of life deemed most important to the Brahmins. As a result, most Brahmins were wealthy people who married, had children and earned a living.²⁷ The practice of Sannyasa was a personal choice but it had no effect on one's emancipation, since it was believed that emancipation depended primarily on making sacrificial offerings.²⁸

During the Upanishads Period, the religious teachings and practices changed from emphasizing the external practice of making sacrificial offerings to the attainment of Brahman as described in the Upanishads. This called for an earnest practice of Tapa or Yoga by leaving the world behind in order to attain Brahman. The belief was that sacrificial offerings lead one to heaven but cannot lead one to attain Moksha and Brahman.

Therefore, the Upanishads Period saw a decrease in importance in the Brahmin's role but an increase in importance in the practice of Sannyasa. Moreover, one could practice Sannyasa early in life and did not have to wait until after one married and had children. This concept made popular the practice of asceticism, the search for contentment and spiritual happiness.

²⁶ Danai Chaiyayota, **The History of South Asia**, 2527 B.E., p. 102-109

²⁷ There are two types of Brahmin: 1) A Brahmin who is married and has children. These are called wealthy Garuhabodibrahmin.
2) A Brahmin who gives up his material wealth in order to practice asceticism. These are called Samanabrahmin.

²⁸ Sumalee Mahanarongchai, **Hindu-Buddhist, Different Views**, 2546 B.E. , p. 31

The Two Branches of Indian Philosophy

The philosophy which gave rise to the Upanishads came about near the time of the Lord Buddha's happening. This was the period where Indian people began to think independently and they were not as closely tied to the traditional practices of the Vedic Period.

There were many groups of free thinkers and several of these are mentioned in the Tripitaka. These included Ajivaka, Paribbajaka, Nigantha, and the six orthodox systems.

This was the period of the two systems, namely the orthodox (astika) systems and the unorthodox (nastika) systems. The orthodox (astika) systems include the Nyaya school of philosophy, the Vaisheshika school of philosophy, the Samkhya school of philosophy, the Yoga school of philosophy, the Mimamsa school of philosophy, and the Vedanta school of philosophy. The unorthodox (nastika) systems include Buddhism and Jainism. Indian thought has been concerned with various philosophical problems, namely, the nature of the world (cosmology), the nature of reality (metaphysics), logics, the nature of knowledge (epistemology), ethics, and the philosophy of religion.²⁹

1. Nastika or Avidika: Adherents of these religions do not believe in the sacredness and greatness of God. They do not accept the Brahmin tradition. These religions include the six schools of thought during the Lord Buddha's time, Jainism, and Buddhism. This system can be further divided into two groups as follows.
 - 1) Rationalist: Believers emphasize the search for knowledge and the truth by using logic and hypothesis. These thinkers believe that knowledge can be gained through human intelligence alone. They do not subscribe to supernatural powers or higher knowledge gained from Nana attainments achieved through meditation practice. These thinkers comprise the philosophers at the early stage of the Upanishads, Ajivaka philosophers, and Paribbajaka philosophers.
 - 2) Experimentalist: Believers emphasize the confirmation of reality through practice. In other words, one must conduct the necessary experiments in order to personally prove reality. These thinkers comprise the philosophers near the end of the Upanishads Period, Jainism, etc.³⁰ The method used by this group of practitioners to search for knowledge came quite close to that of Buddhism.
2. Astika or Vaidika: Adherents of these religions are traditionalists and they accept the Vedas as knowledge revealed by the gods. They view the Vedas as being the greatest and highest source of knowledge for human beings. They are the upholders of the Vedic tradition. And they adhere unconditionally to the traditional learning and practice prescribed in the Vedas.

²⁹ Britanica online Encyclopedia

³⁰ Pisit Gotrasupo, **Buddhist Philosophy**, p. 4

Astika or Vaidika was later codified into a standard list of six orthodox systems or the six Darshanas, all of which cite Vedic authority as their source. These include Vedanta, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Yoga, and Mimamsa. Some details of the different teachings are as follows.

1) Vedanta: Founded by the Yogi Patrayana

Vedanta is originally the word used in Hindu philosophy as a synonym for that part of the Veda texts known also as the Upanishads. The name is a morphophonological form of Veda-anta which means “Veda-end” or the appendix to the Vedic hymns. It is also speculated that Vedanta means the purpose or goal (end) of the Vedas. The philosophy of this sect was based on the belief that Brahman or Paramatman is the eternal, self-existent, immanent and transcendent Supreme and Ultimate Reality which is the divine ground of all beings. Consistent throughout Vedanta is the exhortation that ritual be eschewed in favor of the individual’s quest for truth through meditation governed by a loving morality, secure in the knowledge that infinite bliss awaits the seeker. Hinduism to a great extent owes its survival to the formation of the coherent and logically advanced systems of Vedanta.³¹

It is because each individual possesses a different level of knowledge that each individual’s mind is called Atman. Atman is the same as Paramatman, the mind of Brahma. Since human beings perform different Kamma and regard their Kamma as themselves, they must undergo the round of rebirth. Once Avijja or ignorance can be removed, then Atman will return to Paramatman and the individual will become Brahma. In other words, the philosophical traditions of this sect are concerned with self-realization by which one understands the ultimate nature of reality or Brahman.

2) Nyaya: Founded by the Yogi Gautama

Nyaya is one of the six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy, important for its analysis of logic and epistemology called logical realism. The major contribution of the Nyaya system is its working out in profound detail the reasoning method of inference. Like the other systems, Nyaya is both philosophical and religious; its ultimate concern is to bring an end to human suffering, which results from ignorance of reality. Liberation is brought about through right knowledge. Nyaya is thus concerned with the means of right knowledge.³² The Nyaya school of philosophical speculation is based on texts known as the Nyaya Sutras, which were written by Aksapada Gautama around the 2nd century.³³

³¹ Wikipedia

³² Britanica on line Encyclopedia

³³ Wikipedia

3) Vaisheshika: Founded by the Sanskrit philosopher Kanada Kashyapa

Vaisheshika is one of the six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy, significant for its naturalism, a feature that is not characteristic of most Indian thought. The Sanskrit philosopher Kanada Kashyapa around the 2nd century B.C. expounded its theories and is credited with founding the school. Important later commentaries were written by Prashastapada, Udayana, and Shridhara. After a period of independence, the Vaisheshika school fused entirely with the Nyaya school, a process that was completed in the 11th century. Thereafter the combined school was referred to as Nyaya-Vaisheshika. The Vaisheshika school attempts to identify, inventory, and classify the entities.³⁴ It espouses a form of atomism and postulates that all objects in the physical universe are reducible to a finite number of atoms.³⁵

4) Samkhya or Saakhya³⁶: Founded by the sage Kapila

Samkhya is regarded as one of the oldest philosophical systems in India. It is one of the six orthodox systems of Hindu philosophy. The major text of this Vedic school is the extant Samkhya Karika about 200 CE. This text identifies Samkhya as a Tantra and its philosophy was one of the main influences both on the rise of the Tantras as a body of literature, as well as Tantra sadhana. There are no purely Samkhya schools existing today in Hinduism, but its influence is felt in the Yoga and Vedanta schools.

Samkhya is an enumerationist philosophy that is strongly dualist. Samkhya denies the existence of God or any other exterior influence. Samkhya philosophy regards the universe as consisting of two realities or dualism: Purusha (consciousness or the eternal self) and Prakriti (phenomenal realm of matter). The two are originally separate, but in the course of evolution Purusha mistakenly identifies itself with aspects of Prakriti. Therefore, right knowledge consists of the ability of Purusha to distinguish itself from Prakriti. Prakriti further bifurcates into animate and inanimate realms. On the other hand, Purusha separates out into countless Jivas or individual units of consciousness as souls which fuse into the mind and body of the animate branch of Prakriti.

5) Yoga³⁷: Founded by the Yogi Patanjali in the 2nd century B.C.

Yoga is a physical, mental, and spiritual discipline, originating in ancient India. The goal of yoga, or of the person practicing yoga, is the attainment of a state of perfect spiritual insight and tranquility while meditating on the Super-soul.

Within Hindu philosophy, the word yoga is used to refer to one of the six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy. Yoga in this sense is based on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, and is also known as Raja Yoga to distinguish it from later schools. Patanjali's system has been discussed and elaborated upon in many classical Hindu texts.

³⁴ Britanica on line Encyclopedia

³⁵ Wikipedia

³⁶ Wikipedia

³⁷ The word "Yoga" means to join, to unite, or to attach.

As a term for a system of abstract meditation or mental abstraction it was introduced by Patanjali in the 2nd century B.C. The goals of yoga are varied and range from improving health to achieving Moksha, which is liberation from all worldly suffering and the round of rebirth, at which point there is a realization of identity with the Supreme Brahman. In the Mahabharata, the goal of yoga is variously described as entering the world of Brahma, as Brahman, or as perceiving the Brahman or Atman that pervades all things. For the bhakti schools of Vaishnavism, bhakti or service to Svayam Bhagavan itself may be the ultimate goal of the yoga process, where the goal is to enjoy an eternal relationship with Vishnu.³⁸

6) Mimamsa: Founded by Rishi Jaimini³⁹

The Mimamsa Sutra was written by Rishi Jaimini around 300 – 200 BCE. This sutra is one of the most important ancient Hindu philosophical texts and it forms the basis of Mimamsa, the earliest of the six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy. The text provides rules for the interpretation of the Vedas as well as philosophical justifications for the observance of Vedic rituals. This philosophy teaches that material existence is endless, that there is no liberation. The cycle of Karma is perpetual, and the best one can aim for is higher birth among the Devas. It teaches that the whole purpose of the Vedas is to engage human beings in rituals necessary for creating good Karma, and consequently the mature soul's prime responsibility is to ascertain the exact meaning of the Vedas' sacrificial injunctions and to execute them. Mimamsa theorists decided that the evidence allegedly proving the existence of God was insufficient. They argued that there was no need to postulate a maker for the world, just as there was no need for an author to compose the Vedas or a god to validate the rituals. They believed that the gods named in the Vedas have no existence apart from the mantras that speak their names. To that extent, the power of the mantras is what is seen as the power of gods.

We can see that Indians were thinkers and seekers. They had developed complex religious and philosophical systems where each system subscribed to a set of beliefs and practices. It may be that these were the results of natural environment, diversity, and the caste system.⁴⁰

These religious and philosophical systems may appear vastly different in their details but all of them share one common characteristic. And that is the search for the ultimate truth behind the basis of life, the world, and the universe. From this shared characteristic, each system seeks to find ways to explain its own conception of the ultimate truth which will enable them to attain Moksha or liberation, life's ultimate goal.

³⁸ Wikipedia

³⁹ Wikipedia

⁴⁰ Venerable Mahasomjin Sammapanyo, **Buddhist Philosophy, Essence and Development**, 2544 B.E. , p. 3

ASSIGNMENTS

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

INDIA DURING THE LORD BUDDHA'S TIME

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 3

INDIA DURING THE LORD BUDDHA'S TIME

- 3.1 Economy and Government
- 3.2 Masters of the Six Schools of Thought during the Lord Buddha's Time
- 3.3 The Lord Buddha's History
- 3.4 The Happening of Buddhism and the Change in India's Religious Beliefs and Cultures

CONCEPTS

1. India during the Lord Buddha's time was divided into 16 major kingdoms and 5 minor kingdoms. There were three types of government: imperialism, absolute monarchy, and democracy. Indian economy during the Lord Buddha's time was excellent, and one of the reasons was due to the presence of many immensely wealthy and pious men and women.
2. There were many schools of thought during the Lord Buddha's time but the most famous were the six schools of thought. Masters of these schools of thought included Purana Kassapa, Makkhali-Gosala, Ajita Kesa-Kambala, Pakudha Katyayana, Sanjaya Belatthaputta, and Nigantha Nataputta. Out of these six schools of thought, only some of the teachings of Nigantha Nataputta are somewhat similar to the Lord Buddha's Teachings. And the teachings of Sanjaya Belatthaputta are as insubstantial as a shadow.
3. Before Prince Siddhattha became self-enlightened as the Lord Buddha, He was learnt in all the eighteen branches of the arts, which became useful to His ministry and monastic governance later on.
4. There were many important reasons why the Indian people during the Lord Buddha's time abandoned their religious beliefs and converted to Buddhism. However, the most important reason was the fact that the Lord Buddha's Teachings are about Truth which can be personally proven. During the Lord Buddha's ministry, multitudes of people had practiced His Teachings until they could attain Ariyahood. In other words, they could personally validate and benefit from the Lord Buddha's Teachings. Moreover, the Lord Buddha possessed the Perfect Man form and had an ingenious way of teaching the Dhamma. The Lord Buddha understood His audience's personal preferences; therefore, He could gear His teaching to fit each listener's personal preference. Nowadays, this teaching technique is called student-centered education. Another reason for the Indian people's conversion to Buddhism was the fact that there were many contradictions and conflicts among the teachings of the different orthodox systems.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to learn about the economic conditions and the forms of government in India during the Lord Buddha's time.
2. To enable the student to learn about the history and teachings of the six schools of thought contemporary to Buddhism. This will allow the student to do a comparative study of these teachings and the Lord Buddha's Teachings.
3. To enable the student to learn about the Lord Buddha's life from the time of His birth to the time of His attainment of Complete Nibbana. The student will learn about the Lord Buddha's childhood and the environment in which He grew up and how it affected His religious life both before and after His Self-Enlightenment.
4. To enable the student to learn about the reasons why a large number of Indian people, who had been steeped in their thousands of years old religious beliefs and cultures, should choose to convert to Buddhism. The knowledge gained will enable the student to help propagate Buddhism among non-believers.

INDIA DURING THE LORD BUDDHA'S TIME

3.1 Economy and Government

To understand the history of Buddhism, it is necessary that we learn about the environment surrounding the birth of Buddhism, and the circumstances that had converged to form Buddhism's history. Two aspects of the environment that play a key role in shaping the role, characteristics, and organizational format of Buddhism include government and economy. These two aspects of the environment also had a direct impact on people's daily life.

3.1.1 Politics and Government

Each kingdom in India during the Lord Buddha's time was divided into two parts: the central part and the outer part. The outer part or "Paccantadesa" consisted of border communities and towns. The central part or "Majjhimadesa" was the center of business and education. It was densely populated and it had a large number of sages and scholars. India in those days was divided into 16 major kingdoms and 5 minor kingdoms as stated in the Upasatha Sutta.¹ The major kingdoms included Anga, Magadha, Kasi, Kosala, Vajji, Malla, Ceti, Vansa, Kuru, Pancala, Majjha, Surasena, Assaka, Avanti, Gandhara, and Kamboja. The minor kingdoms were Sakka, Koliya, Bhagga, Videha, and Anguttarapa. Therefore, India was made up of 21 kingdoms altogether during the Lord Buddha's time.

There were some differences in the form of government among these kingdoms. One source cited three different forms of government during the Lord Buddha's time.²

- 1) Imperialism: This form of government was based on domination and subordination organized with an imperial center and a dominated periphery. Sovereign of such a powerful kingdom is called "Maharaja". During the Lord Buddha's time, the kingdom of Anga was under the rule of Magadha and the kingdoms of Sakka and Kasi were under the rule of Kosala.
- 2) Absolute Monarchy: This form of government could be found in the kingdom where the king had absolute power over the kingdom and its people. He may appoint certain royalties or royal advisors or court officials to represent him at times. Sovereign of such a kingdom is called "Raja". Most of the kingdoms during the Lord Buddha's time had this form of government.
- 3) Democracy: This form of government was found in a kingdom which was governed through a council. The council would select one of their members to head the kingdom. The selected head of the kingdom is called "Raja". In those days, this type of government was called "Samaggidham". Examples included the kingdoms of Malla and Vajji.

These three forms of government had persisted in India until it won its independence in 2490 B.E. After the Indian constitution was in place, these three forms of government were abolished and all the kingdoms in India merged to form the country of present day India.

¹ *Āṅguttaranikāya Tikanipāta*. vol. 21, no. 510, p. 273

² Virutch Tirapunmetee, *Buddhist Philosophy on Governance*, p. 8

Table 1
The List of Kingdoms during the Lord Buddha's Time³

No.	Kingdom	Capital	King	Current Location
1	Anga	Campa	King Dhatarattha	West Bengal State
2	Magadha	Rajagarh	King Bimbisara	Bihar State
3	Kasi	Benares	King Brahmadat	Uttar Pradesh State
4	Kosala	Savatthi	King Pasendikosala	Uttar Pradesh State
5	Vajji	Vesali	Vajji Royalties	Uttar Pradesh State
6	Malla	Pava, Kusinara	Malla Royalties	Uttar Pradesh State
7	Cheti	Sotthivadi	King Uparica	Madya Pradesh State
8	Vamsa	Kosambi	King Udena	Uttar Pradesh State
9	Kuru	Indapattha	King Korabya ⁴	Punjab State
10	Panchala	Kampilla	-	Bareilly District
11	Maccha	Matsyagara	-	Jaipur, Rajasthan
12	Surasena	<u>Mathura</u>	King Madhurarajavamtiputta ⁵	Uttar Pradesh State
13	Assaka	Potali	King Assaka ⁶	Maharashtra State
14	Avanti	Ujjeni	King Candapajjoti	Madya Pradesh State
15	Gandhara	Taksila	-	Pakistan
16	Kamboja	Dvaraka	-	Pakistan
17	Sakka	Kapilavastu	King Suddhodana	Nepal
18	Koliya	Devaha	The House of Koliya	Nepal
19	Bhagga	Susungmaragiri	Prince Bhagga	Nepal
20	Videha	Mithila	-	Janakpur, Nepal
21	Anguttarapa	-	-	Pakistan

³ Venerable Mahadaosayarm Vajirapanno, The History of Buddhism in India, 2546 B.E., p. 20.

⁴ *Majjhimanikāya Majjhimaṇṇāsa*. vol. 13, no. 439, p. 306-312

⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 464, p. 326

⁶ *Khuddaka-nikāya. Vimānavatthu*. Vol. 26, no. 63, p. 87

Most of the time, these kingdoms had their own sovereignty. From time to time a weaker kingdom might be colonized by a more powerful kingdom. There were five kingdoms which were strong economically, politically, and militarily. These included Magadha, Kosala, Avanti, Vajji, and Vamsa and the most powerful of all was Magadha which was ruled by King Bimbisara.

3.1.2 The Economic Conditions during the Lord Buddha's Time

According to the Tripitaka and the Commentaries, India during the Lord Buddha's time was very strong economically. Crops were abundant and trading was extensive. Intercity-trading was conducted through trade caravans. In addition, there were many immensely wealthy people such as Jotika, Jadila, Mendaka, Anathapindika, Visakha.

Occupations

In India during the Lord Buddha's time, a person's occupation depends on the caste the person was born into.

- 1) Kshatriya: Members of this caste are high-born and their duty was to rule the kingdom, put down criminals, do battles with invaders. Members of this caste include kings, princes and princesses as well as high-ranking court officials such as royal advisors, court ministers.
- 2) Brahmin: They are teachers and they perform religious rituals and services. They can be ascetics or householders. These include the Masters of the six schools of thought.
- 3) Vaisya: They are the general citizens who earn a living by raising crops, raising farm animals, trading. Craftsmen also belong to this caste.
- 4) Sudra⁷: These are laborers and include the four types of slaves: Those born of slave parents in the master's household; those who are bought as slaves; those who sell themselves as slaves; and prisoners of war. They are low class individuals who earned a living by doing manual labor work or the kinds of work considered repugnant by members of the higher castes.

⁷ They were Dasyus (the indigenous peoples) and descendants of Dasyus

3.2 Masters of the Six Schools of Thought

During the Lord Buddha's time there are many religious Masters but the most famous ones, each with a large following are the Masters of the Six Schools of Thought. These are Purana Kassapa, Makkhali-Gosala, Ajita Kesa-Kambala, Pakudha Katyayana, Sanjaya Belatthaputta and Nigantha Nataputta. Even kings such as King Ajatasattu and King Pasendikosala sought their counsel on philosophical questions. Each Master had hundreds of disciples and all six of them claimed to be Arahats possessing supernatural powers. However, when they were asked difficult questions for which they had no answers, they were wont to become annoyed, angry, and exasperated.⁸ Some details about these Masters and their teachings are as follows.

3.2.1 Purana Kassapa

Venerable Buddhaghosachariya said that Purana Kassapa was born in the Brahmin caste. As a child, he was one of the one hundred servants working in a certain family. He was the 100th servant; therefore, he was given the name Purano. One day he decided to run away from his master's house and along the way some robbers stripped him of his clothes. That was how he arrived at a locality naked. The people saw him and thought him a rare Arahata who practiced contentment. They brought him food and they paid him homage. Purana Kassapa understood that he was regarded with such reverence because he had not a stitch of clothes on him. From then on, he decided to go without clothing and it became his form of asceticism. Later, many men joined him and became his disciples.⁹

His doctrine is called Akiriyavada which means action has no consequences. In the Samannaphala Sutta, Purana Kassapa said to King Ajatasattu that a person commits unwholesome deeds such as killing, stealing, sleeping with someone's wife, lying or causes others to do them for him, the person who carries out the act incurs no consequences, neither does the person who causes him to do it. It is the same with wholesome deeds such as alms-giving, restraint of the sense-faculties, or speaking truthful words. The person who does it or the person who causes another to do it does not reap the good consequences of his act.¹⁰ This doctrine is in total contrast with the Law of Kamma as taught in Buddhism.

3.2.2 Makkhali-Gosala

He was born in a Brahmin family. His father's name was Makkhali and his mother's name was Bhadda. The family lived in the village of Salavan near the city of Savatthi. Venerable Buddhaghosachariya said that the word "Gosala" means a person born in the cowshed. As a child, he was a servant working in a certain family. One day, he was carrying a pot of oil while walking across a muddy ground, his master warned him beforehand not to slip and fall. But he did and all of the oil was spilled. For fear of punishment, he tried to run away but his master caught the hem of the cloth which was wrapped around his body. Makkhali-Gosala decided to shed the cloth he was wearing so that he could run away. Upon entering a certain village, his nakedness inspired the same awe as it did in Purana Kassapa's case.¹¹

⁸ *Khuddaka-nikāya. Suttanipāta.* vol. 47, no. 364, p. 471

⁹ *Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇatta.* vol. 18, no. 568-569

¹⁰ *Dīgha-nikāya. Sīlakhandhavagga.* vol. 53, p. 165-166

¹¹ *Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇatta.* vol. 180, p. 569

That was how Makkhali-Gosala came to form his own school of thought with a large number of disciples.

Members of this doctrine do not take the food offered to them personally. They do not take food if there are dogs or flies near the food because they did not want to take the food away from the animals. They do not consume fish, meat, alcohol, and other intoxicants. They do not store food even when food is scarce¹².

This doctrine is called “Natthikvada” or the theory of purification through transmigration. This doctrine does not believe in cause or aiding condition. In the Samannaphala Sutta, Makkhali-Gosala said to King Ajatasattu that there is no difference between the wise person and the foolish person, for both will reach perfection through gradual transformation. All beings will and must attain perfection in due course. In the meantime, each soul wanders along meeting with good fortune and ill fortune on and on until the time of perfection is reached. The Lord Buddha said that this doctrine is the most useless of all the doctrines and it did not take long for this school of thought to disappear.

3.2.3 Ajita Kesa-Kambala

This school of thought was around before the Lord Buddha's time. The term “Kesa-Kambala” means a person whose clothing is made of hair. This type of cloth is coarse and ugly. The doctrine of this school of thought was the most partial to materialism and its teachings went against all the other schools of thought including Buddhism.¹³

This doctrine is called “Ucchhedavada” and it believed in annihilationism or non-eternalism. Ajita Kesa-Kambala said to King Ajatasattu that alms-giving yields no consequences, the show of respect yields no consequences, gifts-giving yields no consequences, good and bad deeds yield no consequences, this world does not exist, the hereafter does not exist, parents have no special virtues, the spontaneous rising birth mode does not exist, there are no self-enlightened Arahats who penetrate the truth with their supernormal-insight and can teach it to others. This doctrine teaches that each person is made up of the four elements and when he dies, the earth element returns to the earth element, the water element returns to the water element, the fire element returns to the fire element, the wind element returns to the wind element, and the sense-faculties merge with space. Sacrificial offerings yield only ashes. Only a fool says that alms-giving has consequences. Such words are nothing but lies and nonsense because when the body dies, foolish and wise people alike cease to be at death and will not be reborn again.¹⁴

¹² Venerable Mahadaosayarm Vajirapanno (2550 B.E.), The History of Buddhism in India (online)

¹³ Venerable Mahadaosayarm Vajirapanno (2550 B.E.), The History of Buddhism in India (online)

¹⁴ *Dīgha-nikāya. Sīlakhandaḥavagga*. vol. 53, p. 171-172

3.2.4 Pakudha Katyayana

It was said that Pakudha Katyayana was born in a Brahmin family. In his childhood, he had a great interest in religion. After he grew up, he took up the religious life in order to search for Truth. After he believed that he had attained the Dhamma, he set himself up as a religious leader.

Pakudha Katyayana forbids the use of plain water and he uses only hot water or rice water. He teaches that walking past a river or walking through a puddle is a transgression of Precepts and the transgressor must build a sand stupa and pledge the Precepts before he can continue with his walk.¹⁵

This type of doctrine is called "Natthikvada". It does not believe in cause or aiding condition. As written in the Samannaphala Sutta, Pakudha Katyayana said to King Ajatasattu that the seven conditions which include earth, water, fire, wind, happiness, unhappiness, and life, exist on their own and without anyone's doing. They are permanent and as stable as the top of the mountain. They do not change and they do not harm anyone. They do not cause happiness or unhappiness. The killer or the one who causes someone else to kill, the one who hears or the one who says something so that it can be heard, the one who understands or the one who causes others to understand, all of these are not part of the seven conditions. When a person uses a sharp weapon to behead another person, no one kills and no one gets killed because the weapon merely slices into the empty space that exists among the seven conditions.¹⁶

Pakudha Katyayana's doctrine can be called "Sassataditthi" because it teaches worldly permanence. This is opposed to "Ucchedvada" of Ajita Kesa Kambala who says that death is the absolute end.

3.2.5 Sanjaya Belatthaputta

He was one of the famous Masters during the Lord Buddha's time. Upatissa (Venerable Mahamoggalana) and Kolita (Venerable Sariputra) were once disciples of this Master. Sanjaya Belatthaputta had his headquarters in the city of Rajagarh in the kingdom of Magadha. Many people of Magadha subscribed to his teachings. When Upatissa and Kolita along with a large number of their attendants left his teachings to ordain under the Lord Buddha, Sanjaya Belatthaputta became so traumatized that he coughed up blood and died.

This doctrine is called "Amaravikakhepvada". It is the doctrine of skepticism. According to the Samannaphala Sutta, Sanjaya Belatthaputta said to King Ajatasattu that if your majesty were to ask me if other worlds exist, if I think that they exist, I will answer that they do. But my opinion is that this is not this; that is not that; nothing else is; no is no; no is not no. If your majesty were to ask me if the fruits of wholesome and unwholesome deeds exist, if I think that they exist I will answer that they do. But my opinion is that this is not this; that is not that; nothing else is; no is no; no is not no. If your majesty were to ask me

¹⁵ *Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇatta*. vol. 18, p. 569

¹⁶ *Dīgha-nikāya. Sīlakhandhavagga*. vol. 53, p. 174-175

if the hereafter exists, if I think that it does, I will answer that it does. But my opinion is that this is not this; that is not that; nothing else is; no is no; no is not no...¹⁷

King Ajatasattu thought that of all the Masters, Sanjaya Belatthaputta was the most stupid and ignorant of all.¹⁸ Practitioners of skepticism cannot pinpoint anything down for certain. They cannot formulate anything. They fear being wrong or they simply do not know the answer. They are fickle and as slippery as an eel. It was written in the Karatanga Sutta that this doctrine is the doctrine of the blind because it cannot lead oneself or others to know reality. Practitioners of skepticism have a low level of intelligence. They are stupid. They are indecisive because they have no real knowledge of anything.

3.2.6 Nigantha Nataputta

This Master was born in Kundagam in the city of Vaisali in the kingdom of Vajji. He is also referred to as the Prophet Mahavira. He is the disciple of Parsva, the 23rd prophet of Jainism who lived 250 years earlier. Mahavira is the 24th prophet of Jainism and taught for 30 years until his death. After the happening of the Lord Buddha, a large number of Nigantha Nataputta's disciples converted to Buddhism.¹⁹

This religion is now called Jainism. Its doctrine can be called "Attakilamathanugoga" because it teaches that self-mortification is the means of removing defilements and attaining Moksha or liberation.²⁰ A well-trained person is imperturbable by anything physical, verbal or mental.

The three gems of Jainism are right vision or right view (*Samyak Darshana*), right knowledge (*Samyak Gyana*) and right conduct (*Samyak Charitra*). These three gems provide the path of liberation from the round of rebirth or Moksha. When the soul sheds its karmic bonds completely, it attains divine consciousness.

Jainism does not subscribe to a creator and believes the concept of a creator to be nonsensical because no creator can create happiness or unhappiness for a person because happiness or unhappiness is the result of each person's Kamma. Therefore, prayers are totally useless.²¹

Jainism acknowledges that every person possesses different capabilities and capacities in terms of practice and therefore accepts different levels of compliance for ascetics and householders. The Great Vows (Mahavrata) are prescribed for Jain monks and nuns while limited vows (*anuvrata*) are prescribed for householders. Householders are encouraged to practice five cardinal principles of non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy and non-possessiveness with their current practical limitations, while monks and nuns have to

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 180-181

¹⁸ Ibid., vol. 11 p. 99-303

¹⁹ Venerable Mahadaosayarm Vajirapanno (2550 B.E.), The History of Buddhism in India (online)

²⁰ *Dīgha-nikāya. Sīlakhandaḥavagga*. vol. 53, p. 180-181

²¹ Venerable Mahadaosayarm Vajirapanno (2550 B.E.), The History of Buddhism in India (online)

observe them very strictly. With consistent practice, it is possible to overcome the limitations gradually, accelerating spiritual progress.²²

A Jain monk must take the five major vows called Mahavrata.²³ The lay men and women also pursue the same five major vows to a limited extent depending on their capability and circumstances.²⁴ These include:

Ahimsa (Non-violence) – to cause "no harm" to living beings (on the lines of "live" and "let live"). The vow involves "minimizing" intentional as well as unintentional harm to another living creature. There should even be no room for any thought conjuring injury to others, let alone talking about it or performing of such an act. Besides, it also includes respecting the views of others (non-absolutism and acceptance of multiple views).

Satya (Truthfulness) – to always speak of truth such that no harm is caused to others. A person who speaks truth becomes trustworthy like a mother, venerable like a preceptor and dear to everyone like a kinsman. Given that non-violence has priority, all other principles yield to it whenever there is a conflict. For example, in a situation where speaking truth would lead to violence, it would be perfectly moral to remain silent (for you are neither being untrue, nor causing violence by way of truth)

Asteya (Non-stealing) – not to take into possession, anything that is not willingly offered. It is the strict adherence to one's own possessions without desiring for the ones that belong to others. One should remain satisfied by whatever is earned through honest labor. Any attempt to squeeze material wealth from others and/or exploit the weak is considered theft. Some of the guidelines for this principle follow as under:

- Always give people fair value for their labor or product.
- Not to take into possession materials that are not earned or offered by others.
- Not to take materials into personal possession that have been dropped off or forgotten by others.
- Not to purchase materials as a result of being cheaper in value, if the resultant price reduction is a result of improper method of preparation. For instance, products made out of raw materials obtained by way of pyramid schemes, illegal businesses, stolen goods, etc., should be strictly prohibited.

Brahmacharya (Celibacy) – to exercise control over senses (including mind) from indulgence. The basic intent of this vow is to conquer passion, thus preventing wastage of energy in the direction of pleasurable desires. During observance of this vow, the householder must not have a sensual relationship with anybody other than one's own spouse. Jain monks and nuns practice complete abstinence from sexual activity.

²² Wikipedia: Jainism

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

Aparigraha (Non-possession, Non-materialism) – to observe detachment from people, places and material things. Ownership of an object itself is not possessiveness; however, attachment to the owned object is possessiveness. For householders, non-possession means owning without attachment, because the notion of possession is illusory. The basic principle behind observance of this vow lies in the fact that life changes. What you own today may not be rightfully yours tomorrow. Hence the householder is encouraged to discharge his or her duties to related people and objects as a trustee, without excessive attachment or aversion. For monks and nuns, non-possession involves complete renunciation of property and human relations.

Jainism upholds non-violence to an extreme level and its concept shares some similarity with Buddhism. Today, there are about six million Jains in India. Most of them are well-to-do, since they earn their livelihood by trading. Jains cannot grow crops because they hold plants to be living things, and any damage done to plants as in cutting, reaping, is considered a violation of the great vows. Two hundred and forty years after the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana, Jainism is divided into two major sects, namely Svetambara and Digambara. Digambara is the original sect which subscribes to nakedness and solitude whereas Svetambara wears white clothing. They keep their hair long and they do more socializing with other people.²⁵

3.3 The Lord Buddha's History

The Lord Buddha was born in the city of Kapilavastu. His father's name was King Suddhodana and His mother's name was Queen Sirimahamaya. She came from the House of Koliya in the city of Devadaha. When the time of delivery drew near, she returned to her parents' home in Devadaha as was customarily practiced at the time. Half way to Devadaha at the large public park of "Lumbini", Queen Sirimahamaya experienced a birth pang and gave birth to her infant son under the Burmese sal tree near noon on the 15th day of the 6th waxing moon, 80 years before the Buddhist Era.

Five days after the little prince was born, King Suddhodana invited 108 Brahmins learnt in the Vedas to have a meal at the palace. Out of these 108 Brahmins, there were eight who were learnt in the art of making predictions based on a person's physical characteristics. These Brahmins were chosen to give the infant prince a name. These eight Brahmins included Rama, Laksana, Yanya, Dhujja, Bhoja, Sudatta, Suyama, and Kondanna. Seven Brahmins predicted that if the prince remains a householder, he will become a Universal Monarch. However, if he takes up the religious life, he will become self-enlightened as the Lord Buddha. Kondanna, the youngest of them all predicted that the prince will definitely take up the religious life and become self-enlightened as the Lord Buddha. All eight Brahmins agreed on the name "Siddhattha" which means wish fulfillment.

²⁵ Venerable Mahadaosayarm Vajirapanno (2550 B.E.), The History of Buddhism in India (online)

Two days after the naming of the infant prince and seven days after he was born, Queen Sirimahamaya passed away. The infant prince was cared for by Queen Mahapajabodi, his mother's sister and King Suddhdana's second wife. Prince Siddhattha had one stepbrother and one stepsister. Their names were Prince Nanda and Princess Rupananda. He also had several cousins. Prince Mahanama and Prince Anuruddha were the sons of King Asukkodana. Prince Ananda was the son of King Amitodana. Prince Devadatta was the son of Prince Siddhattha's aunt, Princess Amitasakya. Out of these cousins, only Prince Mahanama was older than Prince Siddhattha.

At seven years old, Prince Siddhattha completed his education in the arts taught by the Brahmin teachers of the royal court. Seeing that his son was brilliant, King Suddhodana sent Prince Siddhattha to study under the famous sage Visavamitra. Prince Siddhattha was learnt in the Vedas, the Vedanga, psychology, and the Upanishads. He had learnt these subjects so quickly and so well that the teacher had nothing else left to teach him. Prince Siddhattha was learnt in the arts which included government and was poised to become a great king and a Universal Monarch in the future.

At sixteen years old, King Suddhodana asked Princess Yasodhara or Bimba, the daughter of King Suppabuddha and Queen Amita to marry Prince Siddhattha. Later, the prince and the princess had a son together. His name was Rahula. Prince Siddhattha's life was replete with every good thing. Whatever might please the prince, his father would arrange for him to have it. King Suddhodana wanted to keep his son immersed in worldly pleasures so that he could become king and Universal Monarch later on.

However, the merit accumulated to perfection caused the prince to encounter four celestial messengers when he was 29 years old. These celestial messengers included an old person, a sick person, a dead person, and a monk. These messengers reminded the prince of life's inherent pain and suffering and he wanted to find the way to end it. He decided to take up the religious life by becoming a monk and accompanied by his page Channa, he left the palace on his steed Kanthaka. At the bank of the Anoma River, the prince cut off his hair and took the vow to become a monk. He sent Channa back to the palace to inform his father and relatives of his decision.

The monk Siddhattha went to study under the Yogis Alara and Udaka respectively and had learnt all that there was to learn from each of them. But he knew that such knowledge could not lead him to Self-Enlightenment. Therefore, he decided to go in search of the knowledge that would lead him to attain Self-Enlightenment on his own. He had tried every form of self-mortification widely believed to lead to Self-Enlightenment in those days. Having practiced all of these methods to the extreme for six years without getting any closer to what he was searching for, he decided to practice meditation by moving his mind along the Middle Way. Eventually, he attained Dhammakaya and became self-enlightened as the Lord Buddha on the 15th day of the 6th waxing moon 45 years before the Buddhist Era.

Having attained Self-Enlightenment, the Lord Buddha went around teaching the enlightened knowledge to the people of the Brahmin caste, the Kshatriya caste, the Vaisya caste, and the Sudra caste as well as the Untouchables. Many entered the monkhood and became His disciples. Others declared themselves a Buddhist and took the Triple Gem as their refuge. The Lord Buddha employed different ingenious teaching methods to suit the status and nature of each person so that they could easily follow His teachings and attain Enlightenment. The Lord Buddha had spent 45 years propagating Buddhism in India. He attained Complete Nibbana on the 15th day of the 6th waxing moon when He was 80 years old.

3.4 The Happening of Buddhism and the Change in India's Religious Beliefs and Cultures

The happening of the Lord Buddha was a monumental event and it caused the change in India's history, beliefs, and cultures. As described in chapter 2, ancient India and India during the Lord Buddha's time were dominated by Brahmanism. This religion had been deeply rooted in Indian society for thousands of years especially its teaching concerning the caste system. The Brahmins believed that the Brahmin caste was the most excellent and far superior to all other castes. Therefore, the Brahmins demanded respect from everyone. It was written in the Agganya Sutta about how one Brahmin criticized Vasettha and Bharadvaja for leaving their Brahmin families to ordain as novice monks in Buddhism.

“The Brahmin caste is the most sublime caste. All other castes are inferior. Only the Brahmin caste has fair complexion. Others are dark-complected and impure. Brahmins are born from the chest and the mouth of Brahma. You are leaving the most sublime caste to join the inferior cast of bald-headed monks. They are dark-complected and born from Brahma's feet. Your action is not good. It is not proper.”²⁶

Members of the royal family had to respect the Brahmins as can be seen by the fact that scholarly Brahmins were asked to name Prince Siddhattha.²⁷ When the Lord Buddha went around propagating Buddhism, He met with opposition and was at times treated with contempt. It was written in the Udapana Sutta, “At one point, the Lord Buddha went with a large company of monks to the countryside of Malla. When they arrived at the Brahmin village of Thuna, the Brahmins and other householders covered up the well with grass and chaff so that the bald-headed monks could not drink from it.”²⁸

Another example was shown in the Dhananjani Sutta, the Brahmani Dhananja of the Bharadvaj family believed in the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. One day while she was serving food to her husband, she slipped and exclaimed thrice, “Namo tassa bhavagato arahato summasumbuddhasa” which means I humbly pay homage to the Lord Buddha who is an Arahata. Her husband said to her, “This lowly woman is always praising the bald headed monk's virtues. Look here, lowly woman, now I shall go and question your Master.”²⁹

²⁶ *Dīgha-nikāya Pāṭikavagga*. vol. 15, no. 51, p. 146

²⁷ *Aṅguttaranikāya Ekanipāta*. vol. 32, p. 253

²⁸ *Khuddaka-nikāya. Udāna*. vol. 44, no. 155, p. 692

²⁹ *Samyuttanikāya. Sagāthavagga*. vol. 25, no. 627, p. 195

It was written in the Commentary that one day Dhanaja's husband said to her, Look here, tomorrow 500 Brahmins will be dining here at our house. The Brahmini asked her husband if she could help with anything. The Brahmin said there is nothing for you to do because the servants are taking care of everything. Now for one day whether you are standing, sitting, sneezing, or coughing, do not say Namō Buddhassa. These Brahmins will not appreciate hearing such words. Don't cause them to be mad at me.

The Brahmini said whether or not these Brahmins or any Devas get mad at you, I still cannot help thinking about my Great Master. The Brahmin said you must first try to close all the doors of the houses of 100 Brahmin families if you cannot keep your mouth shut for the time that the Brahmins are here for a meal. Having been unable to dissuade his wife with kind words, the Brahmin finally picked up the dagger lying at the head of the bed and said, woman, if you mention your Master when the Brahmins are here tomorrow, I will use this dagger to cut you up from your toes to your hair.³⁰

Although Brahmanism had been around India for thousands of years but within just a short span of 45 years after the happening of the Lord Buddha, a large number of people in India converted to Buddhism and took the Triple Gem as their refuge. These people were kings, billionaires and millionaires as well as ordinary people. Some religious leaders and many Brahmins also converted to Buddhism.

When the Lord Buddha went to the Brahmin villages such as Sala, Opasada, Veludvara, Venagpura, Icchanamgla, Khanumatta to teach the Dhamma, the villagers heard that the monk Gautama of the Sakya House has arrived at the village of Khanumatta and is staying at Ambalaththika Grove...His fine reputation has spread far and wide. It is said that the Exalted One is an Arahat because He has attained Self-Enlightenment. He possesses Higher Knowledge and has right conduct. He has gone to the blessed place. He possesses penetrating knowledge about reality. He has an incomparable ability to teach people...It is fortunate for us to lay eyes on an Arahat. Consequently, the Brahmins and the villagers left their houses in order to go to Ambalaththika Grove.³¹

Upon arrival, they listened to the Lord Buddha's Dhamma lecture and many attained the Dhamma and took the Triple Gem as their refuge. Each time that the Lord Buddha gave a Dhamma lecture, a large number of people could attain the Dhamma.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 198

³¹ *Dīgha-nikāya. Sīlakhandhavagga.* vol. 12, no. 201, p. 41

The names of kings, Brahmin governors, and Brahmin sect leaders who converted to Buddhism included:

The Kings Who Converted to Buddhism

No.	Name	Kingdom	Evidence of Their Conversion	References
1	King Bimbisara	Magadha	Attained the Dhamma	
2	King Ajatasattu	Magadha	Supported the first Sangiti	
3	King Pasendikosala	Kosala	Declared himself an Upasaka	
4	King Udena	Vamsa	Admired the way Ven. Ananda used the triple robe	
5	King Suddhodana	Sakka	Became an Anagami	
6	Licchavi Rulers	Vajji	Built a stupa to house the Holy Relics	
7	Thuli Rulers	-	Built a stupa to house the Holy Relics	
8	Koliya Rulers	Koliya	Built a stupa to house the Holy Relics	
9	Malla Rulers of Pava	Malla	Built a stupa to house the Holy Relics	
10	Malla Rulers of Kusinara	Malla	Built a stupa to house the Holy Relics	
11	Moriya Rulers	-	Built a stupa to house the Holy Ashes	
12	King Korabya	Kuru	Admired the Lord Buddha	
13	King Madhurarajavampitutta	-	Declared himself an Upasaka	
14	Prince Sujata	Assaka	Took the Triple Gem as his refuge	
15	King Candapajjota	Avanti	Admired Ven. Mahakaccayana	

**Brahmin Governors, Sect Leaders, and Famous People
Who Converted to Buddhism**

No	Brahmin	Position	City/Village	Evidence of Their Conversion	References
1	Pokkharasati	Governor	Ukakattha	Declared himself an Upasaka	
2	Kutadanta	Governor	Khanumatta	Became a Sotapanna	
3	Camki	Governor	Opasada	Declared himself an Upasaka	
4	Lohicca	Governor	Salavatika	Declared himself an Upasaka	
5	a Brahmin	Governor	Vetthadipa	Built a stupa to house the Relics	
6	Sonadanda	Governor	Campa	Declared himself an Upasaka	
7	Janusoni	Famous	Icchanamgala	Declared himself an Upasaka	
8	Brahmayu	Famous	Mithila	Became an Anagami	
9	Subha	Famous	Icchanamgala	Declared himself an Upasaka	
10	Kapadika	Scholar	Opasada	Declared himself an Upasaka	
11	A Brahmin	Millionaire	-	Declared himself an Upasaka	
12	Uggatasarira	Millionaire	Savatthi	Declared himself an Upasaka	
13	A Brahmin	Millionaire	Savatthi	Declared himself an Upasaka	
14	Many Brahmins	Millionaires	Savatthi	Declared themselves Upasakas	
15	Bavri and His disciples	Sect Leaders	Assaka	Admired the Lord Buddha's Perfect Man form and His Supernormal powers	

These are but some examples cited in the Tripitaka. There were in fact a large number of millionaires who believed in and supported Buddhism. Examples included Jotika, Mendaka, Jadila, Anathapindika, and Visakha. In the kingdom of Magadha alone, multitudes of people from 80,000 Tambons converted to Buddhism. This came about because at one point, King Bimbisara had called a meeting of all his subjects and on that occasion allowed them to listen to the Lord Buddha's Dhamma lectures.³²

These examples illustrate how dramatically India had changed as a result of the Lord Buddha's ministry. During this period, Brahmanism had to undergo so many changes that it eventually turned into Hinduism in an effort to keep its believers.

When kings, governors, sect leaders, and millionaires converted to Buddhism, it was natural that ordinary citizens would also like to convert to Buddhism.

The reasons for the rapid change in Indian society were several but the most important one had to do with the Lord Buddha's Teachings. The Lord Buddha teaches perfect knowledge about reality and practitioners of His Teachings can personally see the results. Therefore, a large number of people were able to attain Ariyahood and Arahathship. Many of these people came from the ruling class. Others were wealthy and influential people. And several were sect leaders with a large following.

In addition, Brahmins in general admired the Lord Buddha because He had the Perfect Man form. It was mentioned in an ancient Brahmin chanting that whoever possesses the Perfect Man form will become a Universal Monarch if he remains a householder. But if he takes up the religious life, he will become self-enlightened as the Lord Buddha. Even the Yogi Asita who was King Suddhodana's teacher bowed low at the feet of the infant Prince Siddhattha when he was only a few days old because the Yogi recognized the little prince's Perfect Man attributes.

Another reason for the rapid change in Indian society was the conflicting teachings within Brahmanism itself. Intelligent people in those days wanted to find answers to their spiritual questions but when they could not find the answers themselves, they went to see the Lord Buddha. And they were not disappointed. As a result, some of these intelligent people ordained as Buddhist monks, and others took the Triple Gem as their refuge. A case in point had to do with Vasettha and Bharadvaja and their discussion about what is the way and what is not the way.

Vasettha said that the way taught by the Brahmin Pokkharasati is the only way because it leads to the union with Brahma. Bharadvaja said the way taught by the Brahmin Tarukkha is the only way because it leads to the union with Brahma. Neither of them gave in to the other.

Therefore, they decided to go and see the Lord Buddha so that He could settle the matter for them. The Lord Buddha asked, "Vasettha, of all the Brahmins learnt in the Vedas, is there one who has seen Brahma?" Vasettha answered, "There is none, venerable sir." The Lord Buddha asked, "Vasettha, out of seven generations of Brahmins learnt in the Vedas, is there not a single Brahmin who has seen Brahma? Vasettha answered, "There is none, venerable sir."

³² *Vinayapiṭaka Mahavibhaṅg.* vol. 7, no. 1, p. 1-4

The Lord Buddha asked, “Vasettha, how can it be possible that Brahmins learnt in the Vedas but do not know Brahma or see Brahma teach the way which leads to the union with Brahma? This is like a line of blind people, each holding on to the back of the blind person in front of him. The blind person at the front cannot see. Neither can the blind person in the middle or the back. Therefore, the words uttered by these Brahmins learnt in the Vedas are ludicrous, lowly, and empty...”³³

Having listened to the Lord Buddha's lecture, the two men said, “Venerable sir, the words you utter are truly lovely. You have turned what was up-side-down right-side-up. You have opened what was closed. You have given directions to a person who has lost his way. You are like the light that shines in the dark so that a person with eyes can see what is around him. Your Teachings enable us to see. Most Exalted One, we take the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha as our refuge. Please remember us as devoted Upasakas for the rest of our lives.”

The Lord Buddha's ingenious teaching method also played a crucial role in propagating Buddhism. The Lord Buddha's teaching method is currently known as “student-centered education”. This teaching method allowed the Brahmins to understand the Lord Buddha's Teachings in such a way that they were willing to abandon the thousands years old belief system and cultures and convert to Buddhism. They were willing to abandon the caste system, since there was no caste system in the monkhood. The Lord Buddha said,

Behold, Paharada, all major rivers such as the Ganges, the Yamuna, the Ajiravadi, and the Sarabhumahi, once they flow into the ocean, they leave behind their identity because they are now part of the ocean. Likewise, when members of the four castes, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra, ordain as Buddhist monks, they leave their names and lineage behind because they are now the sons of Sakya.³⁴

ASSIGNMENTS

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

³³ *Dīgha-nikāya. Sīlakhandhavagga.* vol. 12, no. 371, p. 403-404

³⁴ *Āṅguttaranikāya.* vol. 37, no. 109, p. 403-404

CHAPTER 4

BUDDHISM AFTER THE LORD BUDDHA'S ATTAINMENT OF COMPLETE NIBBANA

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 4

BUDDHISM AFTER THE LORD BUDDHA'S ATTAINMENT OF COMPLETE NIBBANA

- 4.1 Buddhism 500 Years after the Lord Buddha's Attainment of Complete Nibbana
- 4.2 Buddhism between 500 and 1000 B.E.
- 4.3 The Decline of Buddhism in India

CONCEPTS

1. Theravada Buddhism recognizes the three Sangitis which were held to settle questions of the Doctrine. The first Sangiti was held three months after the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana. It was held because one Buddhist monk had made an inappropriate comment about the Dhamma-Discipline. The Sangiti was chaired by Venerable Mahakassapa. This was also the time that the Lord Buddha's Sayings were organized and memorized. The second Sangiti was held because the Buddhist monks of Vajji had transgressed the Dhamma-Discipline. These monks did not accept the authority of this Sangiti and they went to hold their own separate Sangiti. They called themselves "Mahasanghika". This incident caused the Monastic Community to split into two groups. The third Sangiti was held because a number of Tittiyas (adherents of another religion) ordained as Buddhist monks under false pretenses. In time, the Monastic Community was eventually split into 18 different schools.
2. The birth of Mahayana School in India was a gradual process. Its initial objective was to change the propagation method and the Lord Buddha's original teachings in order to compete with Brahmanism-Hinduism which was flourishing at the time. The core of Mahayana School teachings has to do with the idealistic Bodhisattva who devotes himself to helping others. Mahayana Buddhism holds the Bodhisattva-Vehicle to be the most elevated path because it can help the most number of people. Later, Mahayana School was split into different schools such as Madhyamika and Yogacara.
3. Buddhism had undergone a continuous change until it eventually split into two major branches, Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism. Theravada School adheres to the Lord Buddha's original teachings whereas Mahayana School modifies its teachings with changing circumstances. Later still, another school emerged, and it is called Tantric Buddhism or Vajrayana School. Tantric Buddhism is a mixture of Buddhism and Hinduism such that almost nothing of the Lord Buddha's original teachings remains.
4. The decline of Buddhism in India was brought about by internal and external causes. Internally, the problems came from within the Buddhist Communities.¹ It started when Bhikkus or Buddhist monks became lax in regards to the Dhamma-Discipline. They neglected meditation practice which is considered to be the heart of Buddhism. Conflicts among members of the monastic community arose out of the differences in their thinking. These conflicts eventually led to divisiveness among members of the monastic community. Internal divisiveness was then the main cause of the decline of Buddhism in India. Externally, there were two main causes. Firstly, Hinduism had gradually assimilated Buddhism, and secondly Moslems were intent on eradicating Buddhism in India.
5. The stability of Buddhism can happen only when Buddhists are practicing Buddhists. Every Buddhist must make an earnest effort to learn and gain a deep understanding of the Lord Buddha's Teachings. Buddhists must be able to apply the Lord Buddha's Teachings in their daily life. In addition, Buddhists must stand together as one and must never vilify each other.

¹ The Buddhist Communities traditionally include Bhikkus, Bhikkunis, novice monks, and lay people.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to learn about important events concerning Buddhism occurring after the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana, especially those which had to do with the propagation of Buddhism to other parts of the world.
2. To enable the student to learn about the birth of Mahayana Buddhism, its concepts and teachings which are different from those of Theravada Buddhism as well as the way Mahayana School modifies its teachings to suit its unique way of propagating Buddhism.
3. To enable the student to learn about the influence of Brahmanism-Hinduism on Buddhism and the events that led to the decline of Buddhism in India.
4. To enable the student to learn about the factors that caused the decline of Buddhism in India so that the student can gain a better understanding of how to prevent Buddhism's decline and how to augment Buddhism's stability.
5. To enable the student to realize the importance of Buddhism and how it is every Buddhist's duty to protect and preserve Buddhism so that it can continue to flourish for a long, long time to come.

BUDDHISM AFTER THE LORD BUDDHA'S ATTAINMENT OF COMPLETE NIBBANA

4.1 Buddhism, 500 Years after the Lord Buddha's Attainment of Complete Nibbana

It was written in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta that the Lord Buddha said to Venerable Ananda, "Ananda, all of you may think that after I am gone, you will no longer have a Master. That is not the case at all, for the Dhamma which I have taught you and the Vinaya* which I have decreed for you will be your Master after I am gone."²

The Lord Buddha's words confirmed the fact that He places the utmost importance on the Dhamma and the Vinaya and wants them to represent His personage after He is gone. It means that members of the Buddhist Communities must hold the Dhamma and the Vinaya as highly and as reverentially as the Lord Buddha Himself, for the Dhamma and the Vinaya are Buddhism itself.

It was written in the Pasadika Sutta³ that after the Master of Jainism passed away, his disciples had bitter arguments among themselves and the sect was eventually separated into different schools. This incident prompted the Lord Buddha to advise His disciples to hold a Sangiti⁴ in order to keep the Dhamma-Vinaya intact so that it can be around to benefit humanity for a long time. The Lord Buddha does not wish His disciples to quarrel among each other about what His Teachings are. It was written in the Sangiti Sutta that Venerable Sariputra has demonstrated the way to hold a Sangiti by categorizing the Lord Buddha's Teachings into topics.⁵

Sangiti means the meeting of Buddhist monks for the purpose of organizing the Lord Buddha's Sayings into categories so that they can be memorized accordingly. The word Sangiti comes from the words San (together) and Giti (to chant); therefore, Sangiti also means chanting together.

Initially, Sangiti was held in order to arrange the Lord Buddha's Sayings into categories. Later, incidents occurred where the Vinaya had been misinterpreted; therefore, a Sangiti was held in order to address the situation. Later, different Sangitis were held to reiterate the original rules, add records of certain events, re-arrange certain rules, etc. Later still, checking for mistakes of the scriptures written down on palm leaves was also called Sangiti.⁶

* or Discipline

² *Dīgha-nikāya Mahāvagga*. vol. 13, no. 141, p. 320

³ *Dīgha-nikāya Pāṭikavagga*. vol. 15, no. 94-106, p. 258-271

⁴ Sangiti is a general convocation of the Sangha in order to settle questions of doctrine and to fix the text of the Scriptures.

⁵ *Dīgha-nikāya Pāṭikavagga*. vol. 16, no. 221-363, p. 157-263

⁶ Suchep Punyanupab, *Tripitaka for the People*, 2539 B.E. , p. 6-7

Altogether four Sangitis had been held in India, only the first and the second Sangitis were recognized by every Buddhist School. The third Sangiti was acknowledged by Theravada School only. The fourth Sangiti was held in the northern part of India and sponsored by King Kanishka. Theravada School does not recognize the fourth Sangiti because it was initiated by Mahayana School. A Sangiti held by Theravada School use Pali as its official language whereas those held by Mahayana School use Sanskrit. Here, only the first three Sangitis will be mentioned, since they are recognized by Theravada School.

4.1.1 The First Sangiti

The First Sangiti	:	It was held three months after the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana.
Presiding Monk	:	Venerable Mahakassapa Thera (Venerable Upali Thera arranged and recited the Vinaya while Venerable Ananda Thera arranged and recited the Sutta.)
Attendees	:	500 Arahats
Sponsored by	:	King Ajatasattu
Reason for Sangiti	:	Venerable Subhadda made a derogatory remark about the Vinaya.
Venue	:	Sattabanguha Cave beside the Vebhara Mountain in the city of Rajagarh
Duration of the Sangiti	:	Seven months

Important Events:

Seven days after the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana, all the disciples, who had not yet attained Arahatship, were grief-stricken. That is, all except for a monk called Subhadda. He was glad and said, "It is good that the Lord Buddha should attain Nibbana. From now on, there will be no one to tell us what we should or should not do."

Venerable Mahakassapa Thera heard the comment and thought, "The Lord Buddha has just attained Complete Nibbana for a few days and someone is already making such an inappropriate remark. If something is not done, soon harm will come to Buddhism. What has not been decreed in the Vinaya will grow while what has been decreed in the Vinaya will shrink. Adhamma teachers will prosper. And Dhamma teachers will suffer." Therefore, after the Lord Buddha's body was cremated, Venerable Mahakassapa Thera invited the Arahats to come together to conduct the first Sangiti.

During the Sangiti, Venerable Ananda told the assembling Arahats that the Lord Buddha allows the monks to cancel minor Sikkhapadas (disciplinary rules) if they deem it necessary. However, an agreement about what disciplinary rules were considered minor could not be reached. Therefore, Venerable Mahakassapa concluded that none of the disciplinary rules as decreed by the Lord Buddha would be canceled. And no new disciplinary rules would be added. Every Arahata at the Sangiti agreed. Theravada School monks have adhered to this decision ever since.

Soon after the first Sangiti was held, one senior monk called Purana and his 500 monks, who had been spending their Rains-Retreat in the countryside of Dakkhina, arrived at the city of Rajagarh. When Venerable Purana Thera was told about the Sangiti, he had the following to say,

“It is good that the first Sangiti is now completed. However, I will continue to practice what I'd heard from the Lord Buddha Himself.” Venerable Purana agreed with most of the points made during the Sangiti except for the disciplinary rules in regards to Vatthu-8. The Lord Buddha allows the practice of Vatthu-8 only during the time of famine. However, it is not allowed once the famine is over.

Vatthu-8 includes:

1. Antovuttha: Storing food in one's shelter.
2. Antopakka: Cooking food in one's shelter.
3. Samapakka: Cooking one's own food.
4. Uggahita: Taking the food which has not been formally offered.
5. Tatonihata: Bringing the offered food back to one's shelter.
6. Purebhatta: When a monk is invited for a meal somewhere, he can eat before he arrives at the designated place.
7. Vatattha: Taking things found in the woods if they do not belong to someone else.
8. Pokkharanattha: Taking things grown in the water such as lotus blooms, lotus roots.

Vatthu-8 was allowed by the Lord Buddha on two occasions: when there was a famine in the city of Vesali and again in Rajagarh. Once the famine was over, the Lord Buddha no longer allowed the practice of Vatthu-8. Venerable Purana heard about Vatthu-8 from the Lord Buddha during the time of the famine but did not hear anything otherwise from the Lord Buddha afterward, since he and his monks were living elsewhere. Distance made communication difficult in those days. Venerable Purana was of the opinion that since the Lord Buddha was all knowing, He would not allow certain practice one day and disallow it another day.

This incident sparked a difference in opinion among the monastic community in regards to the Dhamma-Vinaya (Silasannata) but no divisiveness had yet occurred.

4.1.2 The Second Sangiti

The Second Sangiti	:	It was held around 100 B.E.
Presiding Monk	:	Ven. Yasakakandakaputra Thera (Ven. Revata asked the questions and Ven. Sabbakami provided the answers.)
Attendees	:	700 Arahats
Sponsored by	:	King Kalasokaraj
Reason for the Sangiti	:	Vatthu-10
Venue	:	Valikaram in the city of Vesali in the kingdom of Vajji
Duration of the Sangiti	:	8 months

Important Events:

The second Sangiti was held because the monks in Vajji practiced Vatthu-10 thinking them in line with the Dhamma and the Vinaya. Details of Vatthu-10 are:

1. Vajji monks kept salt on their body so that they could sprinkle it on their food. (Venerable Sabbakami Thera said that keeping salt for the purpose of putting it on food is considered to be Pacittiya-Apatti because it is the storing of food as described in Bhojanasikkhapada.)
2. Vajji monks ate after the noon hour. (Venerable Sabbakami Thera said that eating after the noon hour is considered to be Pacittiya-Apatti because monks are not allowed to eat after the noon hour.)
3. Vajji monks ate at the temple and ate again at someone's house. (Venerable Sabbakami Thera said that the action is considered to be Pacittiya-Apatti.)
4. Vajji monks carried out Patimokkha chanting in separate groups. (Venerable Sabbakami Thera said that monks cannot carry out the chanting of Patimokkha in separate groups because this practice goes against Upasathakhandhaka as decreed by the Lord Buddha. Whoever transgresses against it transgresses every disciplinary rule.)
5. Vajji monks carried out Patimokkha chanting whether or not all the monks in the temple were present. (Venerable Sabbakami Thera said that when monks carry out monastic duties without all members being present, it is considered to be a violation of Campayakhandaka as decreed by the Lord Buddha.)
6. Vajji monks practiced what the Preceptor practiced even if the practice violated the Vinaya. (Venerable Sabbakami Thera said that monks have to practice according to the Vinaya alone.)

7. Vajji monks ate yogurt after the noon hour. (Venerable Sabbakami Thera said that monks are not allowed to eat yogurt after the noon hour. The Vajji monks' action is considered to be Pacittiya-Apatti.)
8. Vajji monks drank alcohol preparation which was not fully fermented but still weakly alcoholic and had the red color of a pigeon's toes. (Venerable Sabbakami Thera said that consuming such a drink is considered to be Pacittiya-Apatti.)
9. Vajji monks sat on a seat covered with a cloth that had no fringe. (Venerable Sabbakami Thera said that sitting on a seat covered with a cloth that has no fringe is considered to be Pacittiya-Apatti.)
10. Vajji monks gladly accepted money offered to them. (Venerable Sabbakami Thera said that accepting money for personal use is considered to be Pacittiya-Apatti.)

On the part of the Vajji monks, when their conduct was found to be unacceptable by the Monastic Community, they went to hold their own separate Sangiti in the city of Pataliputra. There were altogether 10,000 attendees. These monks called themselves Mahasangiti or Mahasanghika, and finally, the Monastic Order was split into two groups, namely, the group led by Venerable Sabbakami Thera and the Mahasangiti group. In time, the Monastic Order was eventually split into 18 different schools. Seven of them were split from the Mahasangiti group and occurred between 100 and 200 B.E. And eleven of them were split from Theravada School since 200 B.E.

According to the Tripitaka, the second Sangiti took place in order to put an end to the difference in opinion in regards to Silasannata. In this case, the difference arose because the Vajji monks violated some of the disciplinary rules. However, according to Mahayana's Sanskrit Scriptures, a different story is told. One day it was the Buddhist Holy Day, Venerable Mahadeva, an Adhammavadi, was chanting the Patimokkha, and he proposed the following five points to the monastic community.

1. An Arahant may be teased by Mara until he ejaculates during sleep.
2. An Arahant may be ignorant of certain things.
3. An Arahant may have questions about certain things.
4. One needs to receive a forecast from someone else before he can attain the different stages of Enlightenment.
5. A person can attain Arahantship just by uttering the word, "Dukkha", etc.

Those belonging to Dhammavadi rejected these five points and held them as wrong views and wrong words. But Dhammavadi monks were smaller in number than Adhammavadi monks and no conclusion could be made. King Kalasoka came himself to stop the argument but he had no idea what to do so he asked Venerable Mahadeva what should be done and the monk answered that let the majority rule. Therefore, Venerable Mahadeva won the argument and King Kalasoka told the Monastic Community to accept Venerable Mahadeva's five points. As a result, the Dhammavadi monks, who were the minority, decided to move to another kingdom.

4.1.3 The Third Sangiti

The Third Sangiti	: It was held in 236 B.E.
Presiding Monk	: Ven. Moggalliputratisa Thera
Attendees	: 1,000 Arahats
Sponsored by	: Asoka the Great
Reason for the Sangiti	: Adherents of another religion (Titthiyas) entered the monkhood under false pretenses.
Venue	: Asokaram in the city of Pataliputra
Duration of the Sangiti	: Nine months

Important Events:

The third Sangiti was held because a large number of Titthiyas ordained as Buddhist monks because Buddhism was flourishing at the time and there was much to be gained by being a Buddhist monk. These Titthiyas ordained as Buddhist monks but refused to practice righteousness according to the Dhamma-Vinaya. For this reason, the monks who practiced righteousness refused to perform Sanghakamma with other monks, since it was difficult to distinguish between practicing and non-practicing monks. The situation had gone on for seven years.

When Asoka the Great heard about the situation, he sent one of his ministers to ask the monks who practiced righteousness to carry out Sanghakamma together with other monks but they refused to do it. Seeing the monks' refusal as a sign of disobedience to the king, the minister had several monks beheaded. Venerable Tissa Thera, who was Asoka the Great's brother, hastened to stop the minister's action. The minister returned to report the situation to the king. Asoka the Great was shocked by the minister's action, and feared that he himself would incur retribution. Therefore, Asoka went to talk to different monks to find out if he would incur retribution from his minister's action but he received different answers. Finally, he was told that he should ask Venerable Moggalliputratisa Thera to answer his question. The senior monk answered that since the king has no intention of killing the monks, he will not incur retribution. The senior monk cited the Lord Buddha's Saying, "Behold monks, I say intention is Kamma. A person thinks and then performs the act with his body, words, and mind."

Once Asoka the Great's conscience was cleared, the senior monk told the king to study the Lord Buddha's Teachings so that he could distinguish them from the teachings of other religions. Later, Asoka the Great asked the monks to come to him one by one so that he could ask them a question. The question is what does the Lord Buddha teach?

If the answer is "Vibhajjavadi", then the monk is a practicing monk. The monks who answered otherwise were Tithiyas pretending to be Buddhist monks. In that case, Asoka the Great would give them a white cloth and tell them to disrobe. It was written in Samandapasadika that as many as 60,000 non-practicing monks had to disrobe at the time. Once the Monastic Community was cleansed of Tithiyas, Asoka the Great asked the remaining monks to conduct Sanghakamma together.

Two interesting observations can be made regarding the situation.

1. The separation of real monks from fake monks through question and answer is really not such a good idea especially in the current environment. A real monk who is not learnt in the Dhamma but practices righteousness according to the Dhamma-Vinaya may give the wrong answer and have to disrobe as a result. At the same time a clever and well educated monk who does not practice righteousness but can provide the correct answer gets to remain in the monkhood.
2. The third Sangiti was mentioned in the Scriptures of Theravada School but not in the Scriptures of other Buddhist schools. Many Buddhist academics suspect that this Sangiti might have been held within Theravada School only. It might be a minor Sangiti and other Buddhist schools were not included. The fact of the matter has yet to be established.

During the third Sangiti, Venerable Moggalliputra penned the Kathavatthu text, which was incorporated into the Abhidhammapitaka. This scripture contains 500 questions and answers about the Principles of Buddhism. After the Sangiti was over, Asoka the Great sent out nine different groups of Dhamma envoys to propagate Buddhism within and outside his kingdom.

1. Venerable Majjhantika Thera: He and his monks went to the kingdoms of Kasmira and Kandhara located in the northwestern part of India. This area is now Cashmere.
2. Venerable Mahadeva Thera: He and his monks went to Mahissaka District located in the south of Godhavari River. This area is now Mosor (in the south of India, next to Madras.)
3. Venerable Rakkhita Thera: He and his monks went to Vanavasi Pradesh in north Kanara located in the southwest.
4. Venerable Yonakadhammarakkhita Thera: He and his monks went to the countryside of Paranta by the Arabian Sea in North Mumbai.
5. Venerable Mahadhammarakkhita Thera: He and his monks went to the kingdom of Maharasadara in the west not too far from Mumbai.
6. Venerable Maharakkhita Thera: He and his monks went to Yonaka Pradesh, which is now Iran.
7. Venerable Majjhima Thera: He and his monks went to Himavan Pradesh in the north, which is now Nepal.

8. Venerable Sona Thera and Venerable Uttara Thera: They went to Suvarnabhumi, which is now Thailand, Burma, and Mon.
9. Venerable Mahinda Thera: He was the son of Asoka the Great and the first monk to spread Buddhism in the island of Sinhala or Sri Lanka.

4.2 Buddhism from 500 to 1000 B.E.

During the Lord Buddha's time and for centuries later, Mahayana Buddhism did not exist. During the 2nd century B.E., Buddhism was divided into two schools, Theravada (Sathaviravadina) and Acariyavada (Mahasanghika). During the 3rd century B.E., Buddhism was divided into 18 schools. Even then Mahayana School had not yet come into existence, although it is believed that the idea was being formulated. During the 6th century B.E., Venerable Ashvaghosa, a Buddhist monk from the city of Saket during the reign of King Kanishka, penned the Satthotapadasart text, which provided the structure for Mahayana Buddhism. And once Mahayana Buddhism came into existence, it grew quickly.⁷

4.2.1 The Birth of Mahayana Buddhism

There were two main factors which gave rise to Mahayana Buddhism. The first factor was the split into different schools within Buddhism. The second factor was the aggressiveness of Brahmanism.

1. The First Factor

The split into different schools within Buddhism occurred as a result of divisiveness within the Monastic Community. Division was caused by:

1. Ditthisamannata or differences in opinion in regards to the Dhamma
 2. Silasamannata or differences in practice in regards to the Dhamma-Vinaya
- These differences had already occurred even during the Lord Buddha's time. For example, the monks of the city of Kosambi once had a conflict and the conflict caused them to divide into two groups, Vinayadhara and Dhammakathika. Each group consisted of 500 monks. The conflict arose from the difference in opinion about what constitutes Apatti and what does not. It started when a Dhammakathika monk did not use up all the water in the toilet and some was left standing. A Vinayadhara monk saw it and pronounced the action to be Apatti. When the Dhammakathika monk wanted to confess the offence, the Vinayadhara monk said, if you did not mean to do it, then it is not Apatti. However, this very monk later told the monks under him that the said Dhammakathika monk did not even know what Apatti was. When words finally reached the Dhammakathika monk, an argument between the two monks erupted. This true story shows how such a trivial matter can lead to divisiveness among the monks and causes much damage to Buddhism as a whole especially if both sides are stubborn and intent on finding faults with each other.

⁷ Prayong Sanburarn, **Mahayana Buddhism**, 2549 B.E. , p. 65

Another example is Venerable Devadat. He wanted to take over the Monastic Community and ruled it in the place of the Lord Buddha. Therefore, he decided to come up with five additional rules for the monks to follow. Having led the monks under him to practice these five rules or Pancavatthu, he went with his monks to see the Lord Buddha in order to declare themselves independent of the Lord Buddha's leadership. The five rules include:

1. Monks must live in the forest all their lives. They are not allowed to go near people's houses.
2. Monks must go on their alms-round. They are not allowed to have a meal in people's house.
3. Monks must only wear robes fashioned out of discarded cloths. They are not allowed to receive new robes from the people.
4. Monks must live under a tree all their lives. They are not allowed to live inside a shelter.
5. Monks must not eat fish or meat of any kind all their lives.

The Lord Buddha deemed these five rules to be much too strict and did not want them to become disciplinary rules. The Lord Buddha wished the practice of these five rules to be optional. From that point on, Venerable Devadat and his monks went to perform Sanghakamma on their own. Later, Venerable Devadat realized how he had wronged the Lord Buddha and wanted to ask for forgiveness but he died before he could reach the Lord Buddha.

If we are to consider the way monks are living in groups in different temples nowadays, the possibility of divisiveness is always there. However, during the Lord Buddha's time, besides the Lord Buddha who ruled over the entire Monastic Community, there were also the two Chief Disciples, Venerable Sariputra and Venerable Moggallana as well as other important disciples such as Venerable Ananda, Venerable Anuruddha, Venerable Mahakassapa, Venerable Mahakaccayana, etc., who looked well after the monks under them. Most importantly, a large number of the Lord Buddha's disciples were Arahats. Therefore, conflicts might have arisen from time to time but they were quickly resolved and things had never gone so far as to cause divisiveness.

After the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana, harmony within the Monastic Community was eroded due to differences in opinion among the monks. There was the difference in the level of Dhamma attainments. There was the difference in family background, social conditions, language, and education. There was also the difference in localities and cultures.⁸

⁸ Kasemsuk Pamornstit, **The Philosophy of Theravada, Mahayana, and Hinayana Buddhism**, 2541 B.E., p. 6

These differences caused the Monastic Community to differ in terms of view (Ditthisamannata) and practice (Silasasamannata). These differences were evident since the first Sangiti was held. Venerable Mahakassapa presided over the Sangiti but Venerable Purana refused to accept the eight Sikkhapadas concerning food. However much Venerable Mahakassapa tried to explain the matter to Venerable Purana, he refused to listen to reasons and continued to practice only the Sikkhapadas which he had heard directly from the Lord Buddha.

Conflicts eventually became so intense that the Monastic Community was split into two groups just 100 years after the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana. Here, the conflict involved Vatthu-10. One group considered Vatthu-10 to be in line with the Dhamma-Vinaya while the other group did not. This serious conflict was the reason for the second Sangiti. And yet, one group of monks did not accept the work of the Sangiti and they left to hold their own separate Sangiti instead. These events caused Buddhism to split into two different schools: Theravada Buddhism (Sathaviravadina) and Acariyavad (or Mahasanghika).

Soon after the third Sangiti was held, Buddhism was split into 18 schools. Later, they developed into three major schools of Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana.

2. The Second Factor

During the Lord Buddha's time, the propagation of Buddhism met with opposition from the leaders of different sects such as the masters of the six schools of thought. Several times, these sect leaders or their disciples especially followers of Brahmanism held a debate with the Lord Buddha. In those days, most of the people in India were adherents of Brahmanism. And yet, Buddhism managed to spread quickly and a large number of people ended up converting to Buddhism. As a result, Brahmanism and many sect leaders were shaken to the core and they sought to destroy Buddhism any way they could. They were against Buddhism for the following reasons.

1. Buddhism does not accept the Vedas (Avaiddika or Nastika).
2. The teachings of Buddhism emphasize morality (Sila), concentration (Samadhi), and wisdom (Panna). The Lord Buddha's Teachings can lead practitioners to attain the Dhamma or Truth on their own.
3. The Lord Buddha does not recognize the caste system as decreed by the Brahmins. The Lord Buddha does not recognize the superior status of the Brahmins.
4. The fast growth of Buddhism⁹

The Brahmins did everything to destroy Buddhism so people would return to Brahmanism but they were not successful. In spite of their efforts, Buddhism spread quickly and was widely accepted by the people. Buddhism was supported by kings and powerful individuals. Asoka the Great of the Moriya Dynasty supported Buddhism and Buddhism flourished during his reign.

⁹ Seri Vuttitumwong, **Buddhist-Hindu Problems**, 2540 B.E., p. 3-4

When the Moriya Dynasty came to an end, Pusayamitra, the court minister belonging to the Sunga House became the reigning monarch of India. This king was a devout Hindu because he was a Brahmin. During his reign, it was the chance for Brahmanism, which had tried every way to destroy Buddhism, to revive itself and destroy Buddhism. King Pusayamitra openly opposed Buddhism. He destroyed Buddhist temples and killed Buddhist monks. He put up a reward for anyone who could decapitate a monk. He revived the practice of making sacrificial offerings by killing horses and offering them up to the gods. He had done much to lead the people back to Brahmanism.

The terrible harm wrought by King Pusayamitra did not completely destroy Buddhism but Buddhism could no longer flourish where it had done in the past. It had to move to the northern part of India in the kingdoms of Swat, Mathura, Candara, etc.

Later, Brahmanism changed its tactics by making Buddhism part of Hinduism through the process of assimilation. Such efforts included the writing of two epical stories called Mahabharata and Ramayana. Both stories were very popular and so were the stories that came from the Bhagavad-Gita.¹⁰ These two epical stories had done much to lead the people back to Brahmanism and once again Brahmanism flourished.

Moreover, the Brahmins also added many more features to Brahmanism in order to attract more believers. They created the Trimurti as the highest refuge by imitating Buddhism's Triple Gem. They built Vihara and important temples and the new Brahmanism or Hinduism quickly became the religion which had a direct impact on the Indian people's lifestyle.

These events prompted some important teachers of Buddhism to modernize the way Buddhism was propagated in order to make it more competitive with Hinduism. And this effort led to the formulation of Mahayana Buddhism.

The monks responsible for initiating Mahayana Buddhism belonged to one of the branches of Mahasanghika School. They were called the Andhaka Group and they had their headquarters in south India in the kingdom of Andhara.¹¹

The formulation of Mahayana Buddhism was a gradual process. The monks of Mahasanghika School and the young Buddhists of the time were of the same opinion that the propagation of Buddhism as well as certain teachings needed to be modified so that Buddhism could spread to ordinary folks.

The Satvahana kings of Andhara supported Mahayana Buddhism and they were its staunch allies and supporters. By the 6th century B.E., Mahayana Buddhism had two major schools, Madhyamika and Yogacara.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 87-89

¹¹ Apichai Potiprasittisard, **Mahayana Buddhism**, 2539 B.E., p. 83

4.2.2 Fundamental Concepts and Beliefs of Mahayana Buddhism

1. The Concept of the Three Vehicles or "Triyana"

Mahayana Buddhism teaches the Three Vehicles as the means to attain emancipation. These include Savakayana, Paccekayana, and Bodhisattvayana.

- 1) Savakayana: It means the path of Arahatsip. Mahayana deems Savakayana as a personal benefit because it is of little help to other living beings. Moreover, it is Mahayana's belief that a monk can attain Arahatsip only through the Lord Buddha's personal instructions.
- 2) Paccekayana: It means the path of Paccekabuddha. A Paccekabuddha can attain Self-Enlightenment but he cannot teach it to others because he had not accumulated the habit of helping other beings.
- 3) Bodhisattvayana: It means the path of the Bodhisattvas. A Bodhisattva is a person who is generous and has great compassion for all living beings. He pursues Perfections for the sake of Buddhahood. Bodhisattvayana is the cause and Buddhahood is the effect. In other words, for Mahayana Buddhism, all the Bodhisattvas have the same status as the Lord Buddha.

Although all three vehicles have the same aim in that it leads one to be free from defilements, Mahayana Buddhism regards Bodhisattvayana as Mahayana, the most important vehicle or Anuttarayana, the most sublime vehicle. An analogy has been given about the three vehicles. They can be compared to three kinds of animals, a rabbit, a horse, and an elephant swimming across the Ganges where the Ganges can be compared to "Paticcasamupapada" or the Law of Causation. The rabbit cannot touch the riverbed and it floats across the river. The horse can at times touch the riverbed. But the elephant can always touch the riverbed. The way the rabbit crosses the river can be compared to Savakayana. The way the horse crosses the river can be compared to Paccekayana. The way the elephant crosses the river can be compared to Bodhisattvayana and Bodhisattvayana is the vehicle of all the Buddhas.¹²

The concept of the three vehicles reflects Mahayana school's fundamental belief that the original way or the Theravada way of attaining emancipation is a narrow way suitable only for certain groups of people. Mahayana school believes that Savakayana is confined to extremely wise individuals who have been earnestly working toward Arahatsip. And the benefits gained from becoming an Arahatsip are mostly personal because the Arahatsip has left behind the rest of living beings to continue with their life struggles. However, Bodhisattvayana is like a great vehicle that can carry multitudes of people. Mahayana school refuses no one and does not care who or what the person is.¹³ Therefore, Bodhisattvayana is considered to be the ultimate vehicle because it can help the maximum number of living beings to attain emancipation.

¹² Ibid., p. 110

¹³ Sumalee Mahanarongchai, **Mahayana Buddhism**, 2546 B.E. , p. 11

2. The Concept of the Three Types of Buddha

Mahayana Buddhism teaches that there are three types of Buddha.

- 1) Adibuddha: Adibuddha came into existence before everything else (Sayambhubuddha). He has no beginning and no end. He gives birth to all other types of Buddha. He gives birth to all the Bodhisattvas. He gives birth to everything and every living being in the Sakalacakkavala. In other words, everything and every living being in the Anantacakkavala come from Adibuddha.
- 2) Dhyani-buddha: These are born of Adibuddha's Jhana powers for the purpose of ruling the entire kingdom as well as smaller kingdoms called "Buddhakasets" or Buddha Lands. Therefore, each Buddhakaset or Buddha Land is ruled by a Dhyani-buddha and it is the Dhyani-buddha who does the work of helping living beings in his particular Buddhakaset. Buddhakasets can differ one from another and the best way to help living beings can also be different for different Buddhakasets.
- 3) Manu-si-buddha: These are born of Dhyani-buddha as an ordinary human being. The role of Manu-si-buddha is to teach living beings to practice the Dhamma and exercise heedfulness.

These three types of Buddha in Mahayana Buddhism reflect the belief that the Lord Buddha possesses Trikaya or three bodies. One body is called Dhammakaya. Dhammakaya is the all-knowing Buddha. Dhammakaya has always existed. Dhammakaya has no beginning and no end. Dhammakaya is Adibuddha. The second body is called Sambhogakaya. Sambhogakaya is the celestial body that shines brightly and comes into existence through the Spontaneous Rising Birth-mode. Sambhogakaya is Dhyani-buddha. The third body is called Niramanakaya. Niramanakaya is the body that takes the form of a human being. Niramanakaya is Manu-si-buddha. It is believed that these three types of Buddha are one and the same but they appear differently to suit each situation for the purpose of teaching and helping living beings.

In Mahayana Buddhism, Manu-si-buddha includes the Lord Dipankara Buddha, the Lord Kassapa Buddha, the Lord Gautama Buddha, the Lord Maitreya Buddha, and the Lord Bhaisajjaguru Buddha. Every Buddha possesses the three bodies or Trikaya. Inside Mahayana Buddhism's shrine hall, one can see three Buddha Images which represent the three bodies of the three types of Buddha. Trikaya represents the Triple Gem in Mahayana Buddhism.¹⁴

¹⁴ Stian Pantarangsee, **Mahayana Buddhism**, 2543 B.E., p. 70

3. The Concept of "Trikaya"

The Trikaya Principle is an important principle in Mahayana Buddhism, and every Mahayana School mentions this concept in different Suttas. Initially, Mahayana Buddhism, like Theravada Buddhism believed that the Lord Buddha possesses only two bodies.

- Nirmalakaya or Rupakaya as called by Theravada Buddhism: It means the Lord Buddha's coarse and refined bodies. Every living being possesses these bodies.
- Dhammakaya: According to the original Mahayana literature, Dhammakaya has two meanings. Firstly, Dhammakaya means the body of the Dhamma. Secondly, Dhammakaya means Tathagatakaya or the truth that forms the foundation of Cakkavala.¹⁵

During the time of Sanga and Vasubandhu, the two teachers of Yogacara School, one more body, Sambhogakaya, was added, and thus completing the concept of Trikaya. At the same time, the concept of Dhammakaya became more like the concept of Theism. And the definition of Trikaya became:

- 1) Dhammakaya means an eternal condition. It is formless. It does not acknowledge the sense of touch. It has no beginning and no end. It has no origin. It is not created. It is self-sustainable. Cakkavala may become void and empty but Dhammakaya will continue to exist. Mahayana Buddhism believes that Dhammakaya expresses itself as Sambhogakaya in heaven. And Sambhogakaya expresses itself as Niramanakaya whose duty is to teach living beings in the human world.
- 2) Sambhogakaya means the real body of the Lord Buddha which is eternal and has the quality of a celestial being. Mahayana Buddhism believes that Sambhogakaya has the ability to appear to a Bodhisattva. Sambhogakaya can acknowledge the prayers, the praises, and the entreaties of believers. And it is Sambhogakaya that transforms itself into Niramanakaya or the Lord Buddha in the human world in order to teach living beings. Therefore, according to Mahayana Buddhism, all of the Lord Buddhas that have happened on earth still exist as Sambhogakaya. And Bodhisattvas can still see them and receive instructions from them.
- 3) Niramanakaya means the body of the Lord Buddha which still falls under the Three Characteristics. That is, it still experiences birth, aging, illness, and death just like ordinary human beings. Mahayana Buddhism believes that Niramanakaya comes from Sambhogakaya for the purpose of teaching living beings not to be reckless but to hasten to practice the Dhamma so that they can quickly put an end to suffering.

¹⁵ Venerable Mahasomjin Sammapanyo, **Mahayana Buddhism**, 2527 B.E., p. 100; Cakkavala has the same meaning as galaxy

The concept of Trikaya is special to Mahayana Buddhism and Trikaya or three bodies are believed to be one and the same but differ only in circumstances and the mode of expression. Niramanakaya is the magical manifestation of Sambhogakaya and Sambhogakaya is the magical manifestation of Dhammakaya which is formless, eternal (Paramatthabhava) and beyond earthly description.

To describe the Lord Buddha as Trikaya is to say that the Lord Buddha, who appears in human form, is but one form of Dhammakaya which is eternal. Therefore, when the Lord Buddha attains Complete Nibbana, He is merely changing back to His original condition which is Sambhogakaya. And what is Sambhogakaya if not the celestial body of Dhammakaya. Therefore, as far as Mahayana Buddhism is concerned, the Lord Gautama Buddha is still in the form of Sambhogakaya existing somewhere within this Cakkavala.

4. The Concept of Buddhakaset

Theravada Buddhism believes that at any given point and time in each Cakkavala, there can happen only one Buddha but Mahayana Buddhism believes differently. They believe that the vast Cakkavala can be divided into countless areas and each area is called Buddhakaset or Buddha Land. And there is a Buddha in each Buddhakaset. Therefore, Mahayana Buddhism believes that more than one Buddha can happen at the same time within each Cakkavala. Therefore, the number of Buddhas that have happened in order to help living beings in each Cakkavala in the past, in the present, and in the future is as incalculable as the number of the grains of sand in the Ganges.¹⁶

All the Buddhas in all the Buddhakaset come from the same Dhammakaya, whether they appear as Sambhogakaya or Niramanakaya. The Buddha of each Buddhakaset may differ in terms of characteristics and attributes depending on the condition of the particular Buddhakaset, these differences are purely external. In reality, every Buddha comes from the same Dhammakaya in the same way that water is water no matter where it is found.

Each Buddhakaset differs according to the level of Perfections of the Buddha who looks after it. If as a Bodhisattva, the Buddha had pursued Perfections to a great extent, then His Buddhakaset will be very prosperous. If as a Bodhisattva, the Buddha had pursued Perfections to a lesser extent, then His Buddhakaset will not be as prosperous. The Buddhakaset believed to be the most prosperous and the most popular of all is called Sukhavati or Pure Land. It is where Amitabha Buddha resides.

Most people think that Sukhavati is another name for Nibbana but according to Mahayana Buddhism, Sukhavati is not Nibbana. But the Buddhakaset of Sukhavati is different from the Buddhakaset in which we are living right now because Sukhavati is a place of joy and pleasure. It does not contain the state of loss and woe. A person born in Sukhavati enjoys every sort of happiness including longevity. The lifespan of its inhabitants is so long as to be eternal.

¹⁶ Somparn Promta, *The Major Schools of Mahayana Buddhism*, 2540 B.E., p. 141-142

It is believed that the concept of Buddhakaset arose because Mahayana Buddhism deems Nibbana as being almost unattainable; hence, beyond the reach of ordinary individuals. Since Nibbana can be attained only by the earnest and continuous practice of morality, concentration, and wisdom throughout countless lifetimes, the aspiration for Nibbana is then changed to the aspiration for a better Buddhakaset, a place attainable through merit accumulation and faith in the Buddha of the particular Buddhakaset. Once an individual is reborn in a more prosperous Buddhakaset, his attainment of Nibbana will be facilitated.

Individuals born in Sukhavati will have a better chance at attaining Nibbana than individuals born in other Buddhakaset. It is believed that individuals born in Sukhavati will definitely attain Nibbana within that lifetime. The same cannot be said for individuals born in other Buddhakaset.

5. The Concept of Bodhisattva

The concept of Bodhisattva can be said to form the core of Mahayana teachings. For believers of Mahayana Buddhism, becoming a Bodhisattva is their ultimate life-goal. Mahayana Buddhism teaches that becoming a Bodhisattva is one form of Enlightenment and Bodhisattvas are sublime individuals whose duty is to help and protect human beings. They are the Devas that dwell in heaven.

According to Mahayana Buddhism, Bodhisattvas, unlike the Buddha, are closer to living beings and can therefore be of greater help to them. Bodhisattvas deserve homage and they serve as believers' spiritual refuge. Bodhisattvas act as a go-between for the Buddha in Nibbana and human beings on earth. It is their duty to help human beings. They possess special powers and are of great help to living beings.

Although all Bodhisattvas aspire to Buddhahood, they opt not to enter Nibbana just yet. But they choose to practice Bodhisattvamagga until they can attain Buddhahood. Bodhisattvamagga includes:

1. The Six Perfections: These are the virtues that lead a Bodhisattva to Nibbana. These six Perfections must be pursued to the fullest extent. The Ten Perfections of Theravada Buddhism were changed to the Six Perfections in Mahayana Buddhism. The Six Perfections include:

Dana Paramita or Dana Parami: A Bodhisattva must willingly give away material wealth, body parts, and life in order to help living beings.

Silaparamita or Sila Parami: A Bodhisattva must observe morality which includes Indriyasamvara, Precepts, Kusalasangahasila, and Sattavasangahasila. Kusalasangahasila means performing good deeds and helping all living beings. Sattavasangahasila means helping living beings to escape from suffering.

Kasanti Paramita or Patience Parami: A Bodhisattva must be able to endure every kind of pressure in order to help living beings.

Viriya Paramita or Viriya Parami: A Bodhisattva must staunchly work for Buddhahood. He must never tire of helping living beings.

Dhyana Paramita or Jhana Parami: A Bodhisattva must achieve all Jhana attainments. He must be tranquil and free of emotions.

Parajna Paramita or Wisdom Parami: A Bodhisattva must penetrate both Puccalasunyata and Dhammasunyata.

2. Appamanna-4: Training the mind to possess the four attributes of loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity, and spread these attributes to all living beings.
3. Mahapanidhana-4: A Bodhisattva must be determined to
 - abandon all defilements
 - become learnt in the Dhamma
 - help all living beings
 - attain Buddhahood
4. The Three Ideals: These include:
 - Mahapanna: A Bodhisattva must penetrate the two-fold Sunnata of Puccalasunnata and Dhammasunnata. He must contemplate the emptiness inherent in individuals and nature. He must not be dominated by defilements.
 - Mahakaruna: A Bodhisattva must be endlessly compassionate. He must be willing to sacrifice himself and take on the suffering of living beings in order to help them put an end to suffering.
 - Mahaupaya: A Bodhisattva must employ clever techniques when teaching others to put an end to suffering and attain the Dhamma.

These three ideals form the heart of Mahayana Buddhism. The first ideal is for the Bodhisattva's own benefits. The second and third ideals are for the benefits of other people, i.e. helping them to end suffering, perpetuating the teachings, and propagating the teachings far and wide.

According to Mahayana Buddhism, Arahats are viewed as being inferior to Bodhisattvas because Arahats help only themselves but do not help others during their pursuit of Arahatship. Bodhisattvas aspire to Buddhahood and willingly give of themselves over and over again. They do not wish to enter Nibbana just yet. Their great compassion make them want to help others without any regards for their own hardship. Therefore, the Bodhisattva ideal becomes more superior to the Arahatship ideal. And the Bodhisattva ideal has become more and more popular until it eventually becomes the core teaching of Mahayana Buddhism.

We can see how Mahayana Buddhism has its own unique teachings. Believers of Theravada Buddhism may find Mahayana teachings difficult to understand, since they differ so much from the original teachings of Theravada Buddhism. However, if we are to consider Mahayana teachings in-depth, we will find that they are related to all the teachings in Theravada Buddhism.

Modification of the original teachings to suit the time and circumstances by the teachers of Mahayana Buddhism can be considered as being beneficial to the propagation of Buddhism. However, there are certain points that can be made here.

1) Modification of the Lord Buddha's Sayings

Mahayana Buddhism employs a superior psychological technique to make Buddhism attractive to the general public. They do this by making the attainment of Buddhahood within reach of every individual. No ceremonies or practices are needed. They make the Lord Buddha's Teachings so accessible that people feel it is within their capability to study the Dhamma.

In comparison, it may appear as though Theravada Buddhism makes the attainment of the ultimate goal much too difficult and only those who are truly earnest dare to work toward it. This makes ordinary people feel that Buddhism is beyond them. This perception is borne out by the fact that most Buddhists in Thailand believe that the practice of Dhamma is the domain of Buddhist monks only. And most Buddhists believe the attainment of different stages of Enlightenment to be beyond their reach. Therefore, they tend to separate secular matters from Dhamma matters because they have no idea how the two can go together.

Looking at things from another angle, it appears that Theravada Buddhism is meant for individuals in that one begins with oneself before one reaches out to others. Mahayana Buddhism, on the other hand, aims at others and pulls them toward oneself. In other words, Mahayana Buddhism places quantity as its priority because when a large number of people are interested in learning the Dhamma, more and more people will be able to attain the Dhamma. It is for this reason that Mahayana Buddhism can spread more easily and is more popular with the general public.

2) The Problems with Modifying the Lord Buddha's Sayings

Modification of the Lord Buddha's Sayings may help Mahayana Buddhism to be successful in propagating Buddhism, but there are problems associated with the process.

When the Lord Buddha's Sayings are viewed as philosophy where logic is emphasized instead of faith, this causes many Mahayana teachers to interpret the Dhamma-Vinaya according to their own thinking and reasoning.

Since it is natural for people's thinking and reasoning to be different one from another and the way one thinks and reasons may not be necessarily acceptable by other people. These differences caused Mahayana Buddhism to be split into different schools. Wherever Mahayana Buddhism finds itself, the tendency to adjust the Lord Buddha's Sayings to fit the environment is always there. If the person in charge is high-minded, then the Lord Buddha's Sayings are more or less intact. However, if the person in charge is flawed in character, then the Lord Buddha's Sayings can suffer adulteration.

It is for these reasons that Theravada Buddhism tends to want to keep the Dhamma-Vinaya completely intact. Such a practice will benefit Buddhism in the long run. Mahayana Buddhism aims to serve the need of society at one particular point in time and when the time changes, it has to constantly remake itself. It is then not surprising that there are so many Mahayana schools in the world today.

4.2.3 The Two Branches of Mahayana Buddhism

India witnessed the birth of two major branches of Mahayana Buddhism: Madhyamika School and Yogacara School. Each of these schools contains such profound teachings that many western academicians have devoted much time to studying them.

1. Madhyamika School

The word Madhyamika means the middle way. The school gets its name from its teachings about the middle way (Majjhimapatipada). However, these teachings are far removed from the teachings in Theravada Buddhism. The middle way of Madhyamika School means the middle way between existence and non-existence, permanence and impermanence, etc. In other words, this school aims to show that it is not that this world exists; at the same time, it is not that this world does not exist but everything results from Paticcasamuppada or the Law of Causation.

In the original teachings, the middle way has to do with ethics or the method of practice whereas in Madhyamika School, it has to do with high philosophy but not much to do with practice.

It was said that Madhyamika School is the first school that split from the original Mahayana School. Madhyamika School was founded by Nagarajuna in the 7th century B.C. He employed the Dialectic Method (debate) to answer different philosophical questions. It was said that he could win every debate and his Dialectic Method attracted the attention of many Buddhist scholars in those days and many thinkers in later times also used him as a role model.

Nagarajuna wrote many texts and his most important work is Madhyamakakrika. This work contains the Madhyamika Philosophy in details. It contains the teachings on Sunyata¹⁷ and how Sunyata is the ultimate reality (Antimasacca). It is because this school holds Sunyata as their basic principle that they are also called Sunyavada School.

¹⁷ According to Nagarajuna, the meaning of Sunyata is difficult to describe because it is the midway between existence and non-existence. He neither confirms nor negates anything.

Madhyamakakrika also contains the teachings about truth or reality in that there are two kinds of truth (Sacca), Sammatisacca and Paramatthasacca. Sammatisacca means Avijja (ignorance) or Moha (illusion) which conceals the truth from us and we make the mistake of thinking that everything has substance. Paramatthasacca means seeing everything as being Sammati in that all conditioned things do not really exist. They are like mirages. Even emancipation is considered to be Sammati. As long as one still adheres to Samamatisacca, one will not be able to attain Paramatthasacca, which is freedom from substance.

Madhyamika teachings as shown above seem difficult to understand for most people because they are full of conflicting and convoluted logic. All the western scholars in later times who have read Nagarajuna's works agree that Nagarajuna is the world's great dialectician the like of which cannot be found in the western world. Even Mahayana Buddhism has to accept the genius of Nagarajuna in the area of Buddhist Philosophy and he was placed in the highest position as the second Buddha. Nagarajuna died in a shrine hall in the city of Amaravadi in the kingdom of Andhara. There still exists today in the south of India the ruin of an ancient stupa called Nagarajunakonda.¹⁸

2. Yogacara School

Yogacara School is an important school opposite Madhyamika School. It was founded by Maitreya-natha at the end of the 8th century B.C. He had written several texts such as Abhisamayalankara, Mahayasutrasankara, etc. Other sources indicated that the formation of Yogacara School was a gradual process and started in 700 B.E. The process was completed in 900 B.E. The school was based on the interpretation system of such important texts as Sandhiniramocana Sutta and Lankavatara Sutta.

Yogacara School reached its highest point during the time of the two brothers, Asanga and Vasubandhu. Both brothers wrote many books which were helpful in spreading Yogacara School. Asanga, the older brother, was an important disciple of Metreya-natha and he carried on the work of explaining Yogacara Philosophy in a systematic manner. The younger brother, Vasubandhu, was originally ordained under Saravasativada or Vaibhasika. Later he followed in his brother's footsteps and converted to Yogacara School.

It was Asanga who named his school Yogacara School. Vasubandhu called it Vijananavada School. The name Yogacara is used because it involves the use of yoga practice in the attainment of enlightenment. The name Vijananavada is used because it holds Cittamatra or Vijanapatimatra which means thought-only or mind-only as the ultimate truth and the only reality. Therefore, Yogacara emphasizes practice whereas Vijananavada emphasizes the estimation of truth.

¹⁸ Apichai Potiprasittisard, **Mahayana Buddhism**, 2539 B.E., p. 160

In Chinese, Yogacara is called Dhammalaksana. It means giving importance to the characteristics of Dhamma. At any rate, the main principle of Yogacara has to do with the belief that only Citta or the mind is real. No other reality exists except for the mind.¹⁹

Madhyamika School and Yogacara School have traditionally been in opposition to each other. Disciples of one school were forbidden to have anything to do with disciples of the other school. They did not perform Sanghakamma together. The conflict between the two schools was caused by their difference in opinion about the concept of Savalaksana or Savabhava. Madhyamika School believes that according to Sammatisacca, all things have no Savalaksana. Everything is an illusion and according to Paramatthasacca, everything is Sunyata.

Yogacara School believes that according to Sammatisacca, not everything is an illusion. If Savalaksana does not exist, then a person who commits a misdeed today will not have to be responsible for it tomorrow because he will already have become a different person. If Savalaksana does not exist, a papaya tree may very well turn into a mango tree or a coconut tree.

In spite of the intense difference in their opinion about Savalaksana, both schools have the same aim, which is emancipation. Yogacara School believed that Citta or the mind is the only reality. Its Savalaksana may change but however much the change takes place, it can continue to keep its original attributes. Therefore, one must do whatever one can to free oneself from the difficulty and complexity of the world by looking at and controlling the current of one's mind.

Madhyamika School holds that ultimately there is nothing. Therefore, they affirm that Savalaksana must be unchangeable. They believed that one must do whatever one can to free oneself from any kind of attachment. They even go so far as to say that ultimately, even emptiness does not exist (Emptiness of Emptiness). Madhyamika School accused Yogacara as belonging to Sassanavada (believing in permanence) while Yogacara School accused Madhyamika School of belonging to Natthikavada (believing in nothingness or the absence of substance). They accused each other with the result that their Wrong View did much harm to Buddhism.²⁰

Actually, the two schools agree that material things and external sensations do not exist but when it comes to the existence or non-existence of the mind, Yogacara School totally disagrees because they are convinced that Madhyamika School's belief in nothingness is wrong and unforgivable. Yogacara believes that at least we must acknowledge that the mind exists because the mind makes right thinking possible. The mind is made up of different thoughts (Cetasika). It is the only thing that is real. Yogacara School practices the philosophy of Mahayana's Abidhamma teachings and as such it has the most in common with Theravada School.

¹⁹ Sumalee Mahanarongchai, **Mahayana Buddhism**, 2546 B.E., p. 96

²⁰ Prayong Sanburarn, **Mahayana Buddhism**, 2549 B.E., p. 76-77

4.3 The Decline of Buddhism in India

4.3.1 The Propagation of Tantric Buddhism

Tantric Buddhism¹ believes that its teachings came directly from the Lord Buddha. It is said that Sakayamuni Buddha held a special meeting with a group of highly intelligent monks in the city of Sridhanayakataka in order to teach them the Esoteric Path. Its content is highly profound; hence, not meant for the general public. Therefore, the teaching is also called Rahasayana or Guyahayana which means mysterious. It is believed that the same teaching was given to Mahayana School at Vultures Peak. This belief has been endorsed by Tibetan historians. Some Indian scholars believe that the Lord Buddha did teach Tantra, mantra, Mudra, and Dharani to the people. They say that someone as brilliant as the Lord Buddha would not exclude the use of magic spells and incantations when these can help deepen the people's faith in Buddhism.

Indian scholars have traced the history of Tantric Buddhism to the time of Maitreya-natha and Asanga of Yogacara School in the 8th century B.E. It is the period where Hinduism was flourishing and for the survival of Buddhism, the teachers of Mahayana School at the time decided that Buddhism and Hinduism had to be willing to make some compromises.

These Mahayana teachers were of the opinion that the Dhamma is difficult for ordinary people to attain. Therefore, they chose to emphasize the use of spells, incantations and other tricks of magic so that Buddhism could be more like Hinduism. Eventually, Tantric Buddhism became practically indistinguishable from Hinduism. The Sangha or Buddhist monks during this period performed all of the services the way the Brahmins did in Hinduism. Tantric Buddhism is called Mantrayana or Tantrayana because emphasis is placed on rituals and incantations. Each mantra is called Dharani and its magical powers are described in elaborate details. Some of the mantras are a page long. Others may be as short as a couple of words. These short ones are called the heart of the spell or the heart of the Dharani. It has the power to help the chanter escape all kinds of harm, and meet with happiness and success. It was inevitable that such teachings would become popular among Buddhists in general, for ordinary folks are always looking for special ways to protect themselves from harm. Adherents of Brahmanism use the power of gods as their protectors. Tantric Buddhism uses the power of the Triple Gem and the power of the Bodhisattvas as well as the power of all the Devas as their protectors. Toward this end even some of the Devas in Brahmanism are also included in Tantric Buddhism. Tantric teachings spread far and wide and became popular among the Buddhists.

The teaching method of Tantric Buddhism is very different from that used by Mahayana Buddhism during its initial period. Mahayana Buddhism taught the Dhamma Principles found in the Suttas and other branches of knowledge which were kept in the form of books and anyone could have access to them, read them, and understand them to a fair degree. By contrast, the scriptures of Tantric Buddhism were compiled into one very long text and only a selected few could have access to it and read it. And these selected few must be personally taught by the teacher. Moreover, the text was written in a language that is mysterious, dubious, and difficult to understand. The text did not say that the teachings came from the Lord Gautama Buddha but they came from another Buddha who provided these teachings in the ancient past. Like Mahayana Buddhism, Tantric Buddhism's ultimate goal is Buddhahood. However, Tantric Buddhism teaches that Buddhahood resides within one's body and at the moment of Citatupapada or epiphany, one can attain Buddhahood instantly, easily, and amazingly. One does not have to wait to attain Buddhahood in the far distant future but can do so now using this brand new method.

Tantric Buddhism had its beginning in the 8th century B.E. and it went by the name of Mantrayana. It did not begin to spread its teachings earnestly until after the 10th century B.E. This Buddhist school created a large number of magic spells and incantations, the purpose of which is to facilitate the attainment of Bodhisattvahood. Many new Devas, both old and new had been added to this school.

After 1293 B.E., Tantric Buddhism was given a new treatment and became Vajrayana. It still retains the original teachings of the Five Tathagatas.²¹ The branch of Tantric Buddhism receiving special attention during this period is called Sahajayana School. This school emphasized meditation practice. Its teaching method involves the use of questions in the forms of words and images, and avoided the use of a set teaching method. In the 15th century B.E., Kalacakka School was founded. This school employed the Kalacakka sign to indicate that its teachings were much more encompassing and emphasis was placed on astrology.

Tantric Buddhism flourished in India since the 15th century B.E. An ordained person in this school is called a Siddha or a magical person. And a Siddha is not that different from a Bodhisattva. It is said that after a Siddha attains the eighth Bhumi, he will possess every type of supernatural powers.²² In Tantric Buddhism, a Siddha is considered to be an Ariya individual.

²¹ These five Dhyani Buddhas include Vairocana Buddha, Aksobhaya Buddha, Ratanasambhava Buddha, Amitabha Buddha, and Aghobhya Buddha.

²² Edward Conze, *A Short History of Buddhism*, 2516 B.E., p. 102

Later, Tantric Buddhism was divided into two major schools.²³ These were Vamacari or left-wing Tantric Buddhism, and Dasinacari or Right-wing Tantric Buddhism. Members of Vamacari do not practice chastity and are more like sorcerers. They live in graveyards, use the skull for their alms-bowl, and have their own secret language called the "Twilight Language" or Sanadhayabhasa. They hold the fulfillment of sensual pleasures as the means to attain Vimokha or emancipation. They assign their Buddha and Bodhisattva to have a wife or "Shakti". Their Buddha Images depict the Buddha holding his Shakti. They believe that the attainment of Nibbana requires the merging of the male element with the female element. The male element is stratagem. The female element is philosophy. When stratagem and philosophy are combined, the result is Nibbana.

In addition, they believe that the Buddha possesses the fourth body called Vajrasattva. This is represented by the image of the Buddha embracing His wife, "Tara" during a sexual act. Today, these types of Buddha Images can be found in large numbers in Nepalese museums. Monks of this school must always have sexual intercourse with a woman in order to show their respect for the Buddha and Tara. They also believe that Buddhahood resides in the woman's sexual organ or Yoni.

Members of right-wing Tantric Buddhism or Dasinacari still practice the Dhamma-Vinaya. As monks, they still practice chastity. It is their view that the teachings must be taken symbolically rather than literally. For example, in the text Sadhanamala written by Anangavajra²⁴, one of the teachers of Dasinacari School, it said that "Sadhu" means an ascetic who deserves the sexual attention of a woman so that he can experience Mahamadhura. Words in this sentence were written in the Twilight Language. This particular sentence must be interpreted as follows. A woman here means wisdom. Sadhu means a man. A stratagem is needed for the two to be united so that Nibbana can be attained. However, Vamacari School takes these words literally and they teach that whoever gives a woman to a Siddha will gain merit.

It can be seen that Tantric Buddhism teaches people to return to defilements. It teaches people to believe in magical powers. It teaches the pursuit of renunciation without the need for sacrifices in that whatever nature means for man to do, just do it. Members of the Shakti sect of Tantric Buddhism perform a ceremony called Cakkapuja where men and women in equal number meet in a secret place at night. They sit around a female image or the image of the female sexual organ. Sometimes the women are naked. These women are the wives of Siddhas. The objective of the ceremony is to worship Yoni. During the ceremony, the men and women would drink alcohol, eat fish, meat, and dried cooked rice before having sexual intercourse. These five acts: drinking alcohol (Madya), eating meat (Mansa), eating fish (Matsa), eating rice (Mudra), and having sexual intercourse (Methuna) are called Pancha Tattva. However, members of Dasinacari School interpret the five "m's" as the Five Aggregates: Rupa (form), Vedana (feeling), Sanna (perception), Sankhara (conditioned things), and Vinnan (consciousness).

²³ It is like Tantric Hinduism which is divided into Dakshinacarina and Vamacarina. Dakshinacarina or right-wing Tantric Hinduism makes sacrificial offerings to the Devas openly whereas Vamacarina or left-wing Tantric Hinduism performs ceremonies in secret and do not tend to show themselves as being Vamacarina.

²⁴ Anangavajra was the son of King Gopala of eastern India. He was one of the 84 teachers and was well-known for his writing prowess. His works such as Prajyopayavisacayasiddhi have been kept in Tibet.

Tantric Buddhism is the outcome of the reaction to the harm wrought on Buddhism in India in those days, which was worsening all the time. Initially, Tantric Buddhism met with such success that it overtook Hinduism. Tantric Buddhism's use of magic spells, incantations, and elaborate ceremonies readily attracted the people's attention. For Tantric Buddhism's Sahajayana School, the influence it exerted was in the area of profound meditation practice.²⁵

Once transgression of the Dhamma-Vinaya occurred and many parts of the original Vinaya were canceled, authentic Buddhism began to disappear. These factors coupled with the increasing influence of Brahmanism eventually gave rise to Tantric Buddhism. Later, when the development of Tantric Buddhism was at its highest point, certain groups of monks came to believe that sex could go hand in hand with monkhood even though the practice of chastity and the abandonment of sensual desire were still strong within the monastic community as a whole. Around the 10th century B.E., evidences were found in the kingdom of Kasmira that monks were entering matrimony. From the 13th century B.E. onward Tantric Buddhism allowed its monks to marry.²⁶ This was the condition of Buddhism during its decline in India and before the time that it disappeared altogether from India.

4.3.2 Buddhism under the Support of the Ruling Class

Of all the religious sects in ancient India, only Jainism remains in the present days in spite of the fact that its teachings do not really fit well with the current environment. Jainism has managed to survive because its disciples have been rich merchants and they have always provided support for the Jain priests. Moreover, Jain communities have always been made up of priests and householders.

By contrast, Buddhism has always been supported by the monarchs and the ruling class. And when Buddhism is not supported by the monarchs and the ruling class, it tends to suffer. The reason is without adequate support from the ruling class, Buddhist monks cannot practice according to the Dhamma-Vinaya; nor can they perform other monastic duties.²⁷

During the Lord Buddha's time, Buddhism was supported by the rulers of different kingdoms such as King Bimbisara, King Pasendikosala, King Candapajjoti, and King Udena. After the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana, Buddhism continued to spread its teachings. And after 200 years, during the reigns of Asoka the Great of the Moriya Dynasty, King Kanishka of the Kusana Dynasty, and King Hansavandhna, etc., Buddhism was able to lay down deep roots in India. These kings supported the growth of Buddhism both in India and abroad.

Asoka the Great was the first person to make Buddhism a global religion. He helped propagate Buddhism to every part of India and to other countries like Sri Lanka, Kasamira, and Gandhara. He also sent Dhamma envoys to the Greek king.²⁸

²⁵ Mahamakut Buddhist University, **The History of Buddhism in the Past 2,500 Years**, 2537 B.E., p. 369

²⁶ Edward Conze, **Buddhism: Its Essence and Development**, 2530 B.E., p. 75

²⁷ Edward Conze, **Buddhism: A Short History**, 2516 B.E., p. 152-155

²⁸ Edward Conze, **Buddhism: Its Essence and Development**, 2530 B.E., p. 92-93

Fifty years after Asoka the Great passed away, the Moriya Dynasty reached the end of its line. Buddhism no longer had the support of the ruling class, and it went through a decline. Buddhism flourished once again in 621 B.E. during the reign of King Kanishka of the Kusana Dynasty. But around 700 B.E., the Kusana Dynasty lost its power. And once again Buddhism was no longer supported by the ruling class. When the Gupta Dynasty ruled the kingdom of Magadha, its kings were adherents of Brahmanism. The last king in India to support Buddhism was King Hansavadhana. He was in power around 1100 B.E. and he ruled over the entire northern part of India. He passed away around 1190 B.E. From that point on, Buddhism stood alone against its arch enemy Hinduism without any support from the monarchy while the monarchs that supported another religion had employed their vast power to destroy Buddhism.²⁹

We can see that the growth and decline of Buddhism in India depended upon the support of the ruling class and the lack thereof. During the period that Buddhism was supported by India's monarchs, Buddhism flourished. But during the period that Buddhism lacked the support of the monarchs, Buddhism underwent a decline.³⁰

4.3.3 What Caused the Decline of Buddhism in India?

Buddhism had its birth in India and was later propagated to different lands outside of India. While Buddhism was flourishing elsewhere in the world, it almost completely disappeared from India. The decline of Buddhism in India was brought about by internal and external causes.

1. Internal Causes

Buddhism is a religion led by monks and has the temple as its center. Buddhist monks are individuals who have chosen to abandon the secular life in order to practice the Dhamma, lessen their defilements, and penetrate the Path of Nibbana. They serve as the lay people's role model. Buddhist monks are the teachers of Dhamma. They teach the Dhamma to the lay people so that the lay people can practice what they have learnt in their daily life. At the same time, the work and livelihood of Buddhist monks depend solely on the support of the laity.

Initially, Buddhism had a large number of Arahats and as such they were true leaders. They led the way when it came to teaching and spreading the Dhamma. They were the role model for ordinary monks and most of the monks had a deep faith in the Lord Buddha. The objective of the ordained life at the time was the earnest pursuit of Nibbana. Venerable monks devoted their lives to studying the Dhamma and practicing meditation. They also taught the Dhamma and meditation practice to the lay people. As a result, it did not take long for Buddhism to flourish.

²⁹ D.C. Ahir, **The Causes of Buddhism's Decline in India**, 2542 B.E., pages 113-114

³⁰ Venerable Mahanikorn Suwandee (2544 B.E.), Master Degree Thesis, Mahidol University, **"The Analytical Study of the Basic Beliefs about the Caste System of Thai Hindus"**, p. 140

As time went by, there was a decrease in the number of Arahats. And among the ordinary monks, there were some who were Dhamma scholars and others who preferred meditation practice. Dhamma knowledge could be assessed and graded and the study of Dhamma could be organized into levels. Meditation practice, on the other hand, pertains to the refined realm and cannot be easily assessed. Moreover, the monks who preferred meditation practice also preferred solitude. As a result, the number of monks who were Dhamma scholars increased with time and they were the ones responsible for monastic governance.³¹

Since the monks who were in charge of monastic governance emphasized Dhamma knowledge, naturally monks in general were encouraged to pursue Dhamma education. These monks might appreciate the importance of meditation practice but since they were not familiar with it, they could support it only to a certain extent. As a result, monks of new generations were mostly trained in Dhamma knowledge and meditation practice became increasingly overlooked.

Dhamma education in the beginning emphasized the learning and understanding of the Lord Buddha's Sayings so that they could be correctly practiced. Later, Dhamma scholars became thinkers and theorists. A number of these monks could not resist questions about higher philosophy from other religions' thinkers and theorists. These questions included: Do this world and the next world exist? What is the sensing mechanism of the mind? How is the world being sustained? Etc. These Dhamma scholars tried to use Buddhist theories and concepts as well as logic to explain these phenomena. They were dealing with questions which the Lord Buddha deemed useless because they would only lead to unnecessary arguments. The Lord Buddha emphasizes the teachings that help human beings to be free of defilements and attain Nibbana. Moreover, when an individual practices meditation accordingly, he will in time come to understand all of these phenomena as a matter of course.

Everyone who practices meditation until he can attain the Dhamma will see the same Truth. This is called Bhavanamayapanna (penetrating knowledge which comes from higher insight). When one tries to think one's way through these phenomena by using logic, this is called Cintamayapanna (knowledge gained from thinking). The problem is Cintamayapanna is not penetrating insight but it results from each individual's thought process and logic. Naturally, different people have different opinions about the same phenomenon. And it was these differences that caused serious arguments among Buddhist theorists. This was how the split into different Buddhist schools happened.³² There were many famous Buddhist theorists in the past; among them were Nagarajun, Asanga, Vasubhandhu, Diganaga, Bhavavivek, Dhamkirati, Santaraksita, etc.³³

³¹ Joseph M Kitagawa, **Buddhism and Social Change: A Historical Perspective**, 1980, p. 89

³² Peter Harvey, **An Introduction to Buddhism**, 2000, p. 73-75

³³ Akira Hirakawa, **History of Indian Buddhism**, 1994, p. 32-300

The concepts of these Buddhist theorists are so profound that they amaze western academicians. But these concepts also caused conflicts among Buddhist monks. Moreover, the profound religious concepts thought up by these theorists turned Buddhism into a religion with such convoluted teachings that ordinary people had no hope of understanding them. Eventually, Buddhism became the religion of monks and only a small number of monks understood these theories. Disagreements among scholarly monks were rife. Eventually, Buddhist lay people became Buddhists in name only, and they attended the temple to accumulate merit more as a tradition than anything else.

At the same time, there was a larger group of monks who decided to practice what the people liked. And this was the use of magic and mystical powers. Emphasis was placed on magic spells and incantations, amulets, lucky charms, etc. Practice of the Dhamma-Vinaya was becoming increasingly lax. Eventually, with the birth of Tantric Buddhism came the concepts that sexual intercourse is the path to Enlightenment, alcohol consumption is good, etc.

Divisiveness among the Buddhist monks, the differences in their concepts and theories, the endless conflicts, the adulteration of the original teachings, and the lack of meditation practice which is the heart of Buddhism, had all converged to weaken the Buddhist Faith from within.

2. External Causes

There were many religions in India and the most influential of all was Brahmanism. The growth of Buddhism caused Brahmanism's influence to decrease, and leaders of Brahmanism were always trying to lure former adherents who had converted to Buddhism back to their fold. They did this by defaming Buddhism, by modifying some of the Lord Buddha's Teachings and made them their own, by changing and adding more Devas until Brahmanism eventually became Hinduism. Brahmanism and Hinduism are often mentioned together.³⁴

Once Buddhism was weakened from within, tactics to destroy Buddhism were changed. And the new tactic was to assimilate Buddhism. A great sage called Sankra (around 1280 B.E.) led the transformation of Hinduism by imitating the practices of Buddhist temples. He built ashrams for Hindu monks called Matha and Matha was used as the center for spreading Hinduism.³⁵ He was always reinventing Hinduism and he even included the Lord Buddha as the ninth avatar or reincarnation of Vishnu³⁶ so that Buddhists could be regarded as Hindus.

³⁴ Brahmanism-Hinduism is based on Brahmanism which flourished before the Lord Buddha's time. In an effort to compete with Buddhism and revive its own religion, Brahmanism had undergone so many changes that it eventually became Hinduism.

³⁵ Mayeda, Sengaku. **History of Indian Philosophy**, 1991, p. 73-75

³⁶ K. Jamanada, **Decline and Fall of Buddhism** (A tragedy in Ancient India) Chapter 1, p.1

On the part of the Buddhists, internal divisiveness coupled with the laity's lack of Dhamma knowledge added to the fact that they were being treated as Hindus caused them to become so confused that they could not tell the difference between Buddhism and Hinduism. And they ended up worshipping Brahma and other Devas as well. Some Buddhist monks went along with the laity by putting up Deva images in the temple. In time, the laity understood Buddhism and Hinduism to be the same thing.³⁷

Around 1600 B.E., the Moslem army invaded India from the north and declared that Buddhism be destroyed. The Moslem army was led by General Kudabuddin under the command of Sultan Mohammed Moghi. The army marched into India from the north to the south and destroyed every Buddhist temple in their path. They also destroyed a large number of Hindu temples.

The Moslem army harbored a special hatred for Buddhist monks. They burnt down every temple³⁸ and killed every Buddhist monk in it. They also gave a reward to anyone who sent in a Buddhist monk's decapitated head. Many Buddhist monks had to either disrobe or flee the country.³⁹

A large number of Stupas were plundered and destroyed. Bricks from the Stupas were removed and used to build houses and roads. Piles of ashes, partially burnt Buddha Images, countless human bones, large piles of iron and wood had been unearthed by archaeologists. These religious places were torched not once but many times. Not only the Moslems that destroyed Buddhism, Hindu Yogis and Hindu adherents also did their share of damage. They had always seen Buddhism as their archrival since the happening of the Lord Buddha. The area that suffered the most damage was the kingdoms of Uttara Pradesh and Bihara, the center of Buddhism at the time.⁴⁰ The Moslems mistook Nalanda for Buddhism's stronghold and the Buddhist monks for Buddhist soldiers. Practically all the monks in Nalanda were killed. Very few monks escaped the carnage.⁴¹ With already very few monks truly knowledgeable in the Dhamma and the laity's lack of Dhamma knowledge, the wholesale murder of Buddhist monks managed to put an end to Buddhism in India.⁴²

³⁷ There were four ways that Buddhism was assimilated:

1. By making up the story about the Lord Buddha being an avatar of Vishu.
2. By describing Buddhist teachings as being the same as Hinduism.
3. By incorporating Buddhist teachings into Hinduism and saying that Brahmanism and Buddhism were the same thing.
4. By taking over Buddhist temples and turning them into Hindu temples.

³⁸ The Moslem army destroyed Nalanda and Vikramasila Universities around B.E. 1740 and 1746 respectively.

³⁹ Surviving Buddhist monks escaped to nearby countries such as Nepal, Tibet, and China.

⁴⁰ Stian Puntarungsee, **Buddhist Places in India**, 2525 B.E., p. 131

⁴¹ D.C. Ahir, **The Causes of Buddhism's Decline in India**, 2542 B.E., p. 74

⁴² Sengaku Mayeda, **History of Indian Philosophy**, 1991, p. 187

Today, it is hard to believe that Buddhism used to reach its highest point in India. Buddhism had suffered blows from Hinduism for a very long time and the fanatical Moslem army finally succeeded in destroying Buddhism in India. The wonton brutality of the Moslem army left the deepest and most painful scar on the Buddhists.

The lessons learnt from what happened to Buddhism in India should remind us of the fact that the stability of Buddhism can be ensured only when there are practicing Buddhists who know and understand correctly the Lord Buddha's Teachings. It is therefore imperative that Buddhists study the Dhamma and practice the Dhamma until higher insight can be attained. Buddhists must be able to apply the Lord Buddha's Teachings in their daily life. Most importantly, Buddhists must be united as one and abstain from defaming each other.

ASSIGNMENTS

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

BUDDHISM IN ASIA

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 5

BUDDHISM IN ASIA

- 5.1 An Overview of Buddhism in Asia
- 5.2 The History of Buddhism in Asia

CONCEPTS

1. Today, Buddhism is flourishing in Southeast Asia and East Asia. The countries in Southeast Asia include Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Most of the Buddhists in Southeast Asia except for Vietnam are Theravada Buddhists. Vietnamese people are Mahayana Buddhists. The countries in East Asia include China, South Korea, Taiwan, Tibet, Japan, etc. Most of the Buddhists in East Asia are Mahayana Buddhists. Buddhism still flourishes in some countries in South Asia. These include Sri Lanka, Bhutan, etc.
2. Buddhism spread to different countries in Asia at different periods. It entered some countries during the Lord Buddha's time. These were the countries that were close to India such as Nepal, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, etc. Buddhism spread to most of the countries in Asia during the reign of Asoka the Great through the nine groups of Dhamma envoys.

Buddhism in any country appeared to experience periods of growth and decline. The decline in Buddhism was caused by external as well as internal factors. The most important internal factor that brought about the decline of Buddhism was when Buddhists were not practicing Buddhists. Non-practicing Buddhists do not study the Dhamma. They do not practice meditation in order to develop higher insight and attain the different stages of Enlightenment. Non-practicing Buddhists cannot truly understand the immeasurable value of the Lord Buddha's Teachings and their faith in Buddhism is at best tenuous. External factors were caused by hostile political situation and/or destruction or damage wrought by other religions. If every Buddhist is a practicing Buddhist, Buddhism will be able to withstand every unfavorable circumstance, and no harm can ever come to it.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to gain an overall picture of Buddhism in Asia in the present time.
2. To enable the student to learn about the history of Buddhism in different regions of Asia: South Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia. The student will learn about how Buddhism experienced periods of growth and decline in each of these countries.

BUDDHISM IN ASIA

5.1 An Overview of Buddhism in Asia

Asia is the birthplace of every major religion: Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. Presently, Christianity has the largest number of adherents: 2,100,000,000. Islam comes in second at 1,300,000,000. The third largest group includes Atheists or Agnostics: 1,100,000,000. Hinduism comes fourth at 900,000,000 and almost all of its adherents live in India. The fifth largest group includes the different religions in China such as Taoism, Confucianism, and other indigenous religions: 394,000,000. Buddhism comes in sixth with 376,000,000 adherents worldwide.¹

Theravada Buddhism has 124,000,000 adherents. Mahayana Buddhism has 205,000,000 adherents. Other Buddhist Schools have about 47,000,000 adherents; out of this number 20,000,000 are adherents of Vajrayana Buddhism.²

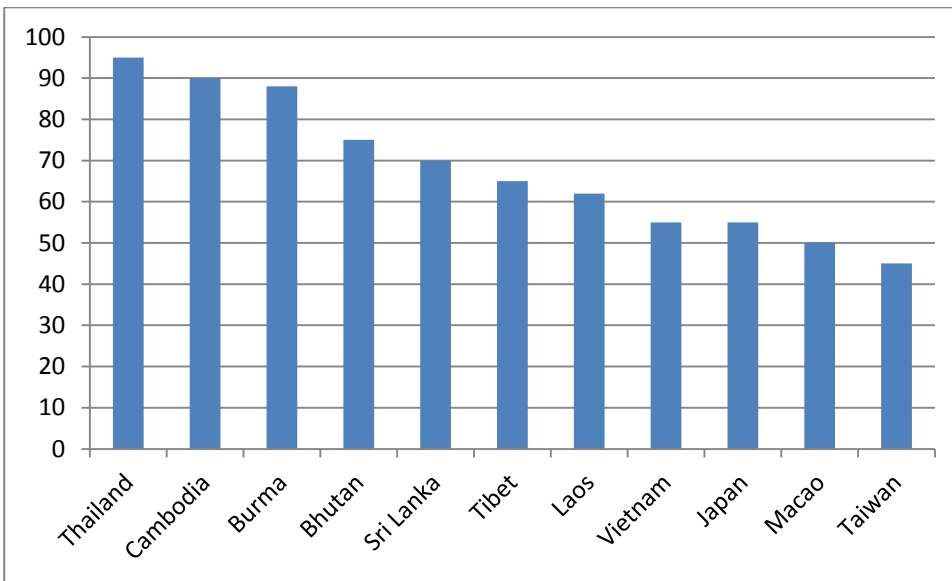
Today, Buddhism is flourishing in Southeast Asia and East Asia. Southeast Asian countries include Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, etc. And East Asian countries include China, South Korea, Taiwan, Tibet, etc. There are a fair number of Buddhists in South Asia in countries like Sri Lanka and Bhutan. There are 7,000,000 Buddhists in India, a very small number compared to the number of Hindus: 900,000,000.

If we are to consider the percentage of Buddhists in each country, Thailand has the highest percentage, 95%. Next to Thailand are the countries of Cambodia, 90%, Burma, 88%, Bhutan, 75%, Sri Lanka, 70%, Tibet, 65%, etc. However, China has the largest number of Buddhists by country, 102,000,000. Next to China are the countries of Japan, 89,650,000 and Thailand, 55,480,000.

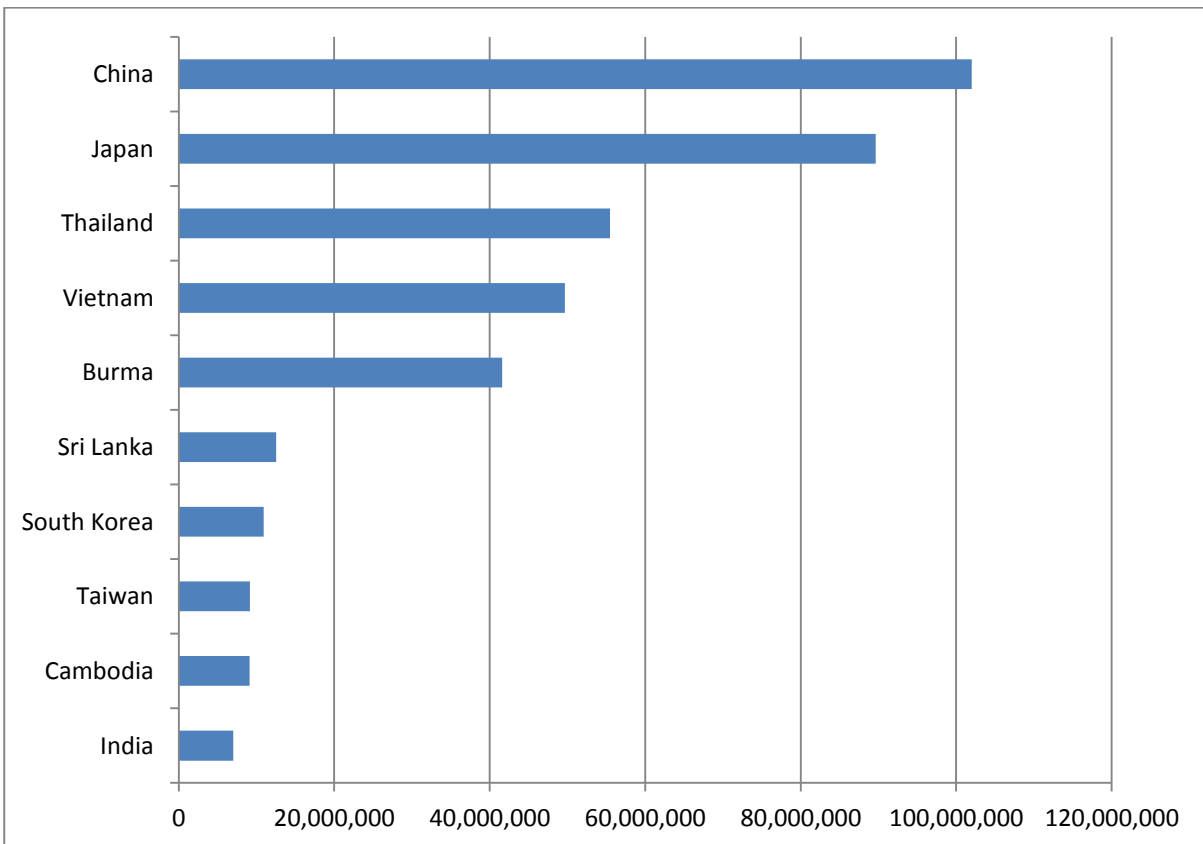
¹ www.adherents.com (B.E. 2549). Major Religions of the World Ranked by Number of Adherents

² www.adherents.com (B.E. 2549). Major Branches of Buddhism

Eleven Countries and One Island with the Highest Percentage of Buddhists



Ten Countries with the Highest Number of Buddhists



5.2 The History of Buddhism in Asia

Buddhism originated in the northern part of India and was later spread to nearby countries. Buddhism entered some countries during the Lord Buddha's time especially those that shared the same border as India such as Nepal, etc. However, Buddhism entered most of the countries in Asia during the reign of Asoka the Great through the nine groups of Dhamma envoys as described in chapter 2. These countries had incorporated Buddhism into their traditional practices in such a way that each country had developed their own unique Buddhist culture.

Asia contains around 60% of the world population and it is connected to the African Continent and the European Continent. The islands in the Indian Ocean and Pacific Oceans are also part of Asia. Asia can be divided into regions as follows: North Asia³, Central Asia, East Asia, Northeast Asia, South Asia, and Southwest Asia (or the Middle East).

Propagation of Buddhism in the old days was carried out by Buddhist monks who traveled using the Silk Road, which was the caravan route connecting South Asia to different towns in Asia Minor and China. The Silk Road was an important trade route. It was the route used to transport such goods as silk yarn, silk, herbs, etc.

Around three to four thousand years ago, ancient civilizations sprung up along the Silk Road. These were the civilizations of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, the Roman Empire, Persia, and India. The Silk Road had two routes: the land Silk Road and the sea Silk Road. The land Silk Road had two main routes.

1. One route began in China from the city of Chang'an. It is now called Xi'an. Chang'an was the capital of Shaanxi Province. The route went past Kansu Province, Xinjiang Province, and across the mountain range of Pamir to Afghanistan and Iran.
2. Another route began in the south of Russia, passed Central Asia and went all the way to the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. This route was longer than 10,000 kilometers. It was the route used for trading and exchanging cultural practices between China and the countries in Central Asia.

By sea, the Silk Road went all the way to Korea, Japan, and the countries in Indochina which included Thailand, Burma, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Indonesia. Travels were also made to the Persian Peninsula and the countries around the Arabian Sea and on to other countries.

³ This terminology is rarely used by geographers but North Asia in general means Russia or Siberia. Geographers consider this region part of Europe. This topic will be considered in the next chapter.

5.2.1 Buddhism in South Asia

The countries in South Asia are located in the Himalayas and include India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh as well as the countries around the Indian Ocean such as Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Buddhism came into existence in India, a land that had many different religious beliefs. But it did not take long for Buddhism to overtake traditional beliefs and practices. Buddhism flourished during the Lord Buddha's time. In later times, Buddhism was spread along the Silk Road to different countries around India.

1. Nepal

The official name of Nepal is the kingdom of Nepal. It is situated in the Himalayas and shares its border with Tibet and India. Its capital and largest city is Kathmandu. The population of Nepal is 27,133,000 (as of 2548 B.E.). The 2001 (2544 B.E.) census indicated that 80.6% of Nepalese are Hindus, 10.7% (2,903,231 people) are Buddhists, 4.2% are Moslems, 3.6% are Kiratis, 0.5% subscribe to local beliefs, and 0.4% subscribe to other religious beliefs.⁴

Buddhism entered Nepal during the Lord Buddha's time because our Lord Buddha was born there in the city of Kapilavastu. In those days, Kapilavastu was in the kingdom of Uttara which was part of India but now it is in Nepal. It became part of Nepal when India came under British rule. During the Lord Buddha's time, the Lord Buddha did go to teach His relatives in Kapilavastu. After the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana, Venerable Ananda went to teach Buddhism in this area. Therefore, a certain number of Nepalese people have been Buddhists since the Lord Buddha's time.

During the reign of Asoka the Great, Asoka allowed one of his daughters, Carumati to marry a high-ranking Nepalese official. Asoka the Great and Princess Carumati had many temples and stupas built in Nepal, their ruins can still be seen in Kathmandu today. Originally, there was only Theravada Buddhism in Nepal but it later became the center of Tantric Buddhism where magic spells and incantations as well as other forms of the black arts were practiced. Nepal witnessed the birth of four major Buddhist philosophical schools: Svabhavibha, Isavrika, Karamika, and Yatrika. And each school is further divided into other minor schools representing the different philosophical thoughts. The teachings of the four schools are as follows.

1. Svabhavibha School: This school teaches that everything in this world has its own true characteristics that show themselves in two ways: growth (Paravaratti) and decline (Nivaratti).
2. Isavrika School: This school believes in the most perfect and the most powerful God.
3. Karamika School: This school teaches mind-training as the means to remove ignorance (Avijja).
4. Yatrika School: This school teaches the existence of right wisdom or Vudhipanna and free will. It is a combination of Indian philosophy and Tibetan philosophy influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism.

⁴ Wikipedia (B.E. 2544). Buddhism in Nepal

During the period that the Moslem army invaded the kingdoms of Bihara and Bengal of India, Buddhist monks in India had to flee to Nepal. They brought with them Buddhist texts and these texts have been preserved up to the present time. But when Nalanda University in India was destroyed, it caused Buddhism in Nepal to go through a decline.

Today, Theravada Buddhism is once again being revived in Nepal. Nepalese monks have gone abroad to study in such countries like Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand. After their return to Nepal, they earnestly help spread Buddhism in their homeland. At one point, the Nepalese monks who went to study in Sri Lanka had asked Venerable Dhandorayasubha, a Sri Lankan monk to come and help them revive Buddhism in Nepal. He did and the Pali Suttas were translated into Nepalese. These translated works were subsequently printed and distributed to the people.

2. Bhutan

Bhutan's official name is the kingdom of Bhutan. It is a small country covering an area of 47,000 square kilometers. It is located in the Himalayas to the south of China and Tibet, to the north of Bangladesh and India, and next to Nepal. Bhutan's capital is called Thimphu. Bhutan government is similar to that of Tibet except that in Tibet, the Dalai Lama is the leader of both religion and politics but the political leader of Bhutan is a king while the Supreme Patriarch called Je Khenpo is the religious leader, equal in status to the king. In the past, both countries used to have the same form of government. Bhutan has a population of 752,000 (as of 2548 B.E.), 74% are Tantric Buddhists, 25% are Hindus, 0.7% are Moslems, and 0.3% are Christians.⁵

The leader of Tantric Buddhism, Guru Padmasambhava brought Tantric Buddhism to Bhutan and Tibet during the 14th century B.E. In the year 1763 B.E., the Tibetan Lama Phajo Drugom Shigpo of the Drukpa Kagyupa School traveled to Bhutan to teach Drukpa Kagyupa. When he arrived in Thimphu, he married Sonam Paldron. Tibetan Lamas are allowed to marry. They had altogether four sons and one daughter. Lama Phajo is highly venerated by the Bhutanese. He was both the religious and political leader of Bhutan. Each of his four sons ruled a different city. The Drukpa School is still an important Buddhist school in Bhutan today.

Initially, Bhutan copied the government style of Tibet in that one person was both a religious and political leader. Later, this form of government was changed, and the king became the political leader whereas the Supreme Patriarch or Je Khenpo was the religious leader. Je Khenpo ruled over the monks and the monks had a role in government by occupying ten seats in the senate. The person who laid down the basis for this form of government was Lama Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyel (2137 – 2194 B.E.). This form of government uses two types of law, So Trim Mi Lu Trim or spiritual law, and Sa Lung Mi Lu Lung or secular law.

On December 17, 2548 B.E., King Jigme Singye Vanchuk declared the form of government to be changed from absolute monarchy to constitutional democratic monarchy. Bhutan's national council is called Tsongdu. Its duty is to pass the law. Tsongdu has 151 members, 106 of them are elected by the people and 55 of them are appointed by the king.

Bhutanese people have an important and sacred festival called Tsechu. It is elaborately arranged annually to recall the birth of Guru Padmasambhava who was believed by Vajrayana Buddhism to have been born in the lotus flower. The time of the festival goes by the lunar calendar. During the festival, there is a mask dance performed by the Lamas learnt in the Vajrayana texts as they don beautiful clothing and different masks representing devas, demons, and animals.

⁵ Wikipedia (B.E. 2549). Religions in Bhutan

3. Bangladesh

Bangladesh's official name is the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The word "Bangladesh" means the country of Bengal. Bangladesh is situated to the north of the Gulf of Bengal and shares its border with India. Its capital and largest city is Dhaka. Bangladesh has a population of 141,822,000 (as of 2548 B.E.), 88.3% are Moslems, 10.5% are Hindus, 0.7% are Christians, and 0.5% are Buddhists. Most of Bangladesh Buddhists live in Chittagong⁶ where many generations of the Barua family have lived.

Bangladesh's history is longer than a thousand years and it used to be part of India. It is the land where Brahmanism and Buddhism used to flourish, that is, until Arabian merchants brought Islam into the country. Now the majority of people in Bangladesh are Moslems.

In 2300 B.E., India came under the rule of the British Empire and it was under British rule for nearly 200 years. India gained its independence in 2490 B.E. and the country was divided into two parts: India and Pakistan. East Bengal used to be part of Pakistan called East Pakistan. The people of East Pakistan were dissatisfied with the central government at the time and on March 26, 2514 B.E., it declared itself a separate and independent country. It received full independence on December 16, 2514 B.E., and the new country is called Bangladesh.

Buddhism entered Bangladesh at different periods beginning in the Lord Buddha's time. We know this because Bengali culture shares a similarity with that of the Magadha culture. In 243 B.E., Asoka the Great sent Dhamma envoys to this land, and in 600 B.E., Kanishka the Great became an adherent of the Buddhist school of Saravastivadina. Mahayana Buddhism flourished in Bangladesh from 1643 to 1843 B.E. After this period, Buddhism went through a decline and was eventually replaced by Brahmanism.

Later, during the Rakhine period⁷, Buddhism flourished in Chittagong because Chittagong was under Rakhine rule. A large number of Buddhist monks trekked from the Rakhine Kingdom to Chittagong to propagate Buddhism. This period lasted 100 years and it is the reason that there are Theravada Buddhists in Chittagong today. There are two schools of Buddhism in Bangladesh.

1. The Mathe School or Mahatheranikaya: This is an ancient Buddhist school that subscribes to the original Theravada teachings. There are about 40 – 55 monks of this school living in the localities of Raushan, Ranguniya, Bovalgali, and Pacalaisa.
2. The Sangharaja School: This school came after the Mathe School. About 100 years ago, the Supreme Patriarch Medhamahathera formed this school. There are about 800 or so monks of this school living in different parts of the country.

⁶ Chittagong is one of the six major regions in Bangladesh. The six districts include Khulna, Chittagong, Sylhet, Dhaka, Bharisal, and Rajshahi.

⁷ The Rakhine period is the period where the Mon people ruled over Burma.

4. Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's official name is the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has been hugely impacted by the fights between the government⁸ and the separatist militant organization, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The Civil War ended with the cease-fire agreement in early 2545 B.E. Sri Lanka's capital is called Sri Jayawardenapura-Kotte. Its largest city is Colombo. It has a population of 20,743,000 (as of 2548 B.E.), 68% are Buddhists, 18% are Hindus, 7-8% are Christians. Most of the Hindus are Tamil people whereas Christians are Portuguese and Dutch people.⁹

Sri Lanka has a strong Buddhist culture especially in regards to ordination. Men prefer to ordain for life and ordination takes place only once a year and only one monk can be ordained in a day. For these reasons, Sri Lankan monks are quality monks. Today, a large number of Sri Lankan monks travel to different countries to propagate Buddhism. This work is made possible because of their deep faith in Buddhism and their proficiency in the English language.

Sri Lanka has been the center of Theravada Buddhism since ancient times. Buddhism entered Sri Lanka from India around 236 B.E. through the group of Dhamma envoys led by Venerable Mahinda Thera sent by Asoka the Great. They went to Sri Lanka during the reign of King Devanampiyatissa. At the time, thousands of Sri Lankan men ordained as Buddhist monks. The king donated Mahameghavana Park to the monastic community to be used as a temple, and it was called Mahavihara Temple. Venerable Mahinda Thera brought to Sri Lanka the Tripitaka and the Commentaries as well as cultures, arts, and architecture.

Later, Queen Anula and a large number of ladies wanted to ordain. King Devanampiyatissa sent a diplomatic envoy to Asoka the Great asking for Venerable Sanghamitara Theri and a southern branch of the Bodhi Tree. Subsequently, a large number of Sri Lankan women had the opportunity to ordain as Bhikkunis.

In 433 B.E.¹⁰ and during the reign of King Vattagamaniabhaya, the Tamils seized and controlled Anuradhapura for 14 years. The king had to flee elsewhere in order to amass an army. During this period, he received support from Venerable Mahatissa. The king resumed power after he had quelled the Tamils. He sponsored a Sangiti and during this Sangiti the Lord Buddha's Sayings were written down for the first time on palm leaves. He supported Venerable Mahatissa and had the Abhayagirivihara Temple built for the venerable monk. This action caused the Mahavihara monks to become dissatisfied. It was then that the Sangha was split into two groups, Mahavihara and Abhyagirivihara.

The Mahavihara group was a conservative group and they had kept the Dhamma-Vinaya intact. They also considered the monks of the other Buddhist school immoral. The Abhyagirivihara group, on the other hand, was open-minded and willingly accepted the opinions of other Buddhist schools.

⁸ The government is the leader of the Sinhalese people that are the majority in Sri Lanka.

⁹ Wikipedia (B.E. 2549). Demographics of Sri Lanka

¹⁰ Or 450 B.E. according to some sources

Venerable Buddhaghosacariya: Some time later, one famous Buddhist sage called Venerable Buddhaghosacariya (born in 945 B.E.) traveled from India to visit the Mahavihara group in order to study Buddhism and translate different Buddhist texts. He wrote at least thirteen important Buddhist texts that are still being studied by Buddhists today. Some of these texts include Nanodayapakarana, Visudhimagga, and the Commentaries to explain certain texts in the Tripitaka such as the Dhammapada Commentary, the Jataka Commentary, the Vinaya Commentary, and the Sutta Commentary.

Between the 12th and the 17th century B.E., Sri Lanka experienced problems due to Indian invasions as well as internal unrest. It was during this period that Bhikkunis disappeared and there were fewer and fewer Bhikkus left. In 1609 B.E., King Vijayabahu I wanted to revive Buddhism but he could not find even five Bhikkus who had been properly ordained. Therefore, he had to invite Buddhist monks from southern Burma to ordain men in Sri Lanka.

During the reign of King Prakaramabahu I (1697 -1730 B.E.), the son of King Vijayabahu I, Buddhism in Sri Lanka flourished. The monks were united as one and for the first time the king appointed the Supreme Patriarch to rule over the entire monastic community. The king had many beautiful temples built and Sri Lanka became the center of Buddhist education. A large number of Buddhist monks and Buddhist sages from other countries came to study Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Sometime after the reign of King Prakaramabahu I, Sri Lanka was once again attacked by the Tamils. They took over certain parts of the country and continued to expand their territory until the Singhalese kingdom had to retreat south and the location of its capital had to be moved often. Under such circumstances, Buddhism could no longer flourish but it was still intact. In 2019 B.E., a group of men from Burma came to be ordained in Sri Lanka and they brought back to Burma with them Buddhist texts written in Pali.

About the year 2050 B.E., Portuguese traders came to Sri Lanka and took over some parts of the country by force. They tried to force Sri Lankans to convert to Catholicism and Buddhism went through a decline. Eventually, the Sri Lankans had to once again invite Buddhist monks from Burma to ordain men in Sri Lanka.

In 2200 B.E., the Dutch traders entered Sri Lanka and chased the Portuguese traders out. The Dutch took over certain parts of the country and brought Christianity with them. The Dutch tried to undermine Buddhism and at the same time Sri Lankan Buddhists were busily killing each other. There were severe droughts and all the monks had to disrobe leaving only a few novice monks behind. The leader of this group of novice monks was Saranankara.

In 2294 B.E., this novice monk Saranankara asked the Sri Lankan king, Kiratisrirajsinha to send a diplomatic envoy to Thailand to ask for Thai monks to come and help revive Buddhism in Sri Lanka. This happened during the reign of King Paramakosa of Ayudhaya. He sent ten Buddhist monks from Thailand led by Venerable Upali. The Thai monks ordained 3,000 Sri Lankan men in the city of Kandy. The novice monk Saranankara was also ordained as a Buddhist monk, and became the Supreme Patriarch. This event gave birth to the Siamvongsa School or Upalivongsa School. Later, Venerable Upali fell ill and passed away in Sri Lanka.

In the same period, a group of Sri Lankan novice monks went to undertake ordination in Burma and returned to Sri Lanka to establish the Amarapura School. There was yet another group of novice monks who went to undertake ordination in Mon and returned to form the Ramana School. Therefore, in that period, there happened three Buddhist schools in Sri Lanka: Siamvongsa, Amarapura, and Ramana. These schools have survived up to the present time.

In 2345 B.E., the British Empire replaced the Dutch and signed an agreement with the king of Sri Lanka. The agreement guaranteed the rights of Sri Lankans and the protection of Buddhism. Later, the Sri Lankans staged an uprising and when the uprising was put down, the agreement was changed and monarchy was abolished.

During the initial part of the British rule, Buddhism enjoyed a certain level of freedom. However, as time passed, it met with increasing opposition from the Christian Faith. The government was under pressure to cancel the earlier agreement which gave protection to Buddhism. As a result, the Christian organization had control over the country's education and the only Buddhist school left was Dida Dodunduva. Christian ministers continuously and viciously attacked the Buddhist teachings and no one could resolve the situation until Venerable Gunananda Thera appeared at the scene. Venerable Gunananda Thera was born in 2366 B.E. He undertook ordination and studied the Dhamma-Vinaya until he became an expert in it. He volunteered to defend Buddhism by holding a debate with the Christian ministers. He won the debate and Buddhism in Sri Lanka had the chance to flourish again.¹¹

The debate was held five different times between February 2408 B.E. and August 2416 B.E. Many non-believers who read about the debate in the newspapers converted to Buddhism. One of these people was Henry Steele Olcott. He and Madam H. P. Blavatsky decided to travel to Sri Lanka in 2423 B.E. As soon as they landed in Sri Lanka in Kalle Harbor, they went to the Vijayananda Temple and publicly converted to Buddhism by pledging to be Buddhists. Olcott was a major revivalist of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. He established 400 Buddhist schools nationwide to compete with Christian schools.

There were other westerners who came to study Buddhism in Sri Lanka and became revivalists of Buddhism. One of these people was F. L. Woodward, a Protestant minister's son from Saham, England. He arrived in Sri Lanka on August 1, 2446 B.E., and taught at the Mahinda Buddhist College.

¹¹ Personnel Development Institute, **Gunananda Thera: Revivalist of Buddhism in Sri Lanka**, 2548 B.E. pages 91-99

At the time, there were 60 students in the college taking classes in an old Dutch building. Mr. Woodward donated more than 2,000 pounds to have a new building erected. He designed the building himself, supervised the construction, and devoted himself to his work. Soon the student body increased to 300. Mr. Woodward taught different classes daily and he knew every student's formal name and nickname. Mr. Woodward was a disciplinarian and he made sure that his students learnt discipline. The college underwent a rapid growth. Mr. Woodward had worked for free as the college's principal for 16 years. He was a devout Buddhist. He wore white clothes and observed the Eight Precepts on the day of the full-moon. He invited venerable monks for a meal at the college several times a year. When the monks arrived, he would humbly wash their feet.¹²

Thanks to the effort of these revivalists, Buddhism flourished once again in Sri Lanka. More importantly, Buddhism is today the state religion of Sri Lanka.

¹² Colonel Nuam Sa-nguansup, **Western Buddhist Philosophers**, vol. 1, p. 110-116

5.2.2 Buddhism in East Asia

East Asia includes China, Taiwan, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, and Japan. Buddhism in East Asia is Mahayana Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhism had spread from India to China, from China to Korea, from Korea to Japan, etc. As for Tibet, some sources say that Buddhism entered Tibet during the Lord Buddha's time.

1. China

The capital of the People's Republic of China is Peking but its largest city is Shanghai. The People's Republic of China is a single-party state governed by the Communist Party of China. It is the world's most populous country with a population of 1,315,844,000 (as of 2548 B.E.). It is difficult to estimate the number of Buddhists in China. However, Wikipedia estimated it to be around 280 to 350 million¹³ while www.adherents.com reported it to be 102 million. Nonetheless, China has the largest population of Buddhists in the world. China has a longer than 4,000 years history and had been ruled by different dynasties: Sia, Sang, Jo, Jin, Hun, Gin, Liang, Sui, Tang, the six dynasties of Song, Liao, Yuan, Ming, and Ch'ing as well as other dynasties. But here only the dynasties that had a role in Buddhism will be mentioned.

Buddhism entered China around 608 B.E. during the reign of King Hun Ming Ti of the Hun Dynasty. Legend has it that one night the king dreamt that a golden man was flying toward the west. He asked the royal officials what his dream meant, and one official said that a sublime individual (the Lord Buddha) had been born. The king told eighteen of his officials to go in search of this sublime individual. When they reached the city of Khotan,¹⁴ they met two Buddhist monks, Venerable Kasayapamatanga and Venerable Dhammaraksa. The Chinese officials decided to invite these two monks to teach Buddhism in China.

The venerable monks agreed and white horses were used to transport Buddhist texts and a Buddha Image to Lo Yang, the capital city of China at the time. King Hun Ming Ti was delighted and had a temple built outside the city gate of Yong Mern and named the temple Pair Bey Yee which means the White Horses Temple to commemorate the white horses that carried the Buddhist texts to China. The White Horses Temple is, therefore, the first Buddhist temple built in China. The first ordination in China took place in 793 B.E., when the Indian monk Venerable Dhammakala went to the north of China to the city of Lo Yang to ordain a group of Chinese men.¹⁵

¹³ Wikipedia (B.E. 2549). Religion in China

¹⁴ Khotan is currently located in the southwestern part of Sinkiang Province in the Mideast of China. In ancient times, Khotan was part of India and Buddhism reached Khotan before B. E. 326.

¹⁵ Satian Potinanta, **The History of Buddhism, Oral Tradition**. vol. 1, 2539 B.E., p. 197-198

Under the rule of the Gin Dynasty, the Mongols invaded the north of China and took control of the entire Yellow River basin. China was therefore split into North China and South China. This period is called the Nam Pak period (between the 8th and the 11th century B.E.). The north was occupied by the Mongols and the south was occupied by the Chinese. The Yangtze River served as the natural border between the two territories. During this period, the Chinese monks Serng Jian brought the Buddhist text “Mahasanghika and two Bhikkunis, Kanman and Patimokkha to the city of Lo Yang. And the first Chinese Bhikkuni was ordained between 900 and 904 B.E. at the Bhikkuni temple of Ju Lin in Lo Yang. Her name was Jing Jian.¹⁶

King Ngui Bu Te of North China was an adherent of Taoism. He believed the Taoist monks when they told him that they could concoct for him a magical potion which would make him live for 10,000 years provided that he first destroyed Buddhism. As a result, King Ngui Bu Te ordered the temples burnt and the Buddhist monks killed. One of his sons was a Buddhist and he sent messengers to forewarn the Buddhist monks. As a result, the lives of most of the monks were saved but more than 30,000 temples were destroyed.

After King Ngui Bu Te died, his grandson ascended the throne and began to revive Buddhism between 929 and 1077 B.E. He built the Tun Huang Cave for the Buddhist monks as a place for practicing meditation. More additions were made to the cave in the following centuries until it became quite an astonishing place. It consists of more than 400 large and small manually dug caves. Chinese Buddhists of the past wanted to preserve the Lord Buddha’s Teachings so they wrote the teachings on different cave walls and closed each cave with a stone slab. Today, Tun Huang Cave is in the middle of the Gobi desert in the town of Tun Huang, Kan Su Province.

King Liang Bu Te ascended the throne in 1022 B.E. in the city of Nan King in South China. He was called Asoka of China. During his reign, there were a large number of Buddhist monks. In the city of Lo Yang alone, there were altogether two million Bhikkus and Bhikkunis as well as 3,000 foreign monks.¹⁷ King Liang Bu Te was a vegetarian and he forbade the killing of animals in his country. The monks also became vegetarians after the manner of the emperor. This tradition is still being practiced today. The emperor was a student of the Dhamma and often gave Dhamma lectures to the people.

Venerable Bodhidharma from South India went to spread Buddhism in China during the reign of King Liang Bu Te. He went to North China in 1069 B.E. and built the Shaolin Temple on Mount Song Shan in Henan Province. He founded the Chan School. Chan means Jhana in Pali or Dhyana in Sanskrit or Zen in Japanese. Legend has it that at Shaolin, Venerable Bodhidharma sat in meditation facing a wall for nine years without rising from his seat.¹⁸

¹⁶ Suchart Hongsa, *The History of Buddhism*, 2549 B.E., p. 56-78

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Satian Potinanta, *The History of Buddhism, Oral Tradition*, vol. 1, 2539 B.E., p. 202

Zen Buddhism emphasizes meditation practice for the attainment of Jhana or Zazen without the employment of words or any Dhamma lessons. The school's motto is "Puk lip bun yee tik jee nang sim kiang sare seng hud" which means requiring no alphabets but going straight to the human mind, penetrating the truth and attaining Buddhahood. Later, Zen Buddhism spread to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Today, Zen Buddhism is very popular among westerners.

Venerable Bodhidharma was also the original master of the now famous Shaolin Kung Fu. At the time, Venerable Bodhidharma saw how the monks' poor health was a real deterrence to their earnest practice of meditation. He therefore devised a way for the monks to train their body so that they would be well enough to practice meditation in earnest. Initially, Kung Fu was the means to attain the core of Dhamma and it was not until later that it was turned into a form of martial arts. During the Tang Dynasty (1161 to 1450 B.E.), Shaolin martial arts received full support from the monarchy to the extent that there was an army of Shaolin monks. In times of war, the monks would disrobe to fight for the country. And they would return to the monkhood after the war was over.

Great harm was wrought on Buddhism: During 1117 and 1120 B.E., great harm was wrought on Buddhism in Jew Province. During this period, Buddhism and Taoism were abolished and two million Buddhist monks were forced to disrobe. Temples were confiscated and Buddha Images were melted down to make gold bouillons and coins. During the reign of Emperor Hian Tong, no new temples could be built, no new Buddha Images could be cast, no Suttas could be printed without permission. Any man wishing to ordain had to be able to memorize one thousand pages of the Suttas or pay the sum of 100,000 to the government.

In 1388 B.E., during the reign of Emperor Bu Jong, the emperor was a devout Taoist and he appointed a Taoist monk as the minister of state. The emperor ordered a debate to be held between Buddhist monks and Taoist monks. It turned out that the Buddhist monks won the debate. Emperor Bu Jong became so incensed that he ordered more than 4,600 temples destroyed. More than 40,000 Cetiya and Viharas were also destroyed. More than 260,000 Bhikkus and Bhikkunis were forced to disrobe. During the reign of King Zse, Buddhist monks were told to wear their robe like a Taoist monk. In some periods such as during the reign of King Yin in 1578 B.E., government sold ordination tickets to anyone wishing to ordain, thus, making it impossible for poor people to ordain. Bhikkus had to pay tax except for those who were handicapped or 60 years old and older.

Tang Dynasty, Buddhism's Golden Age: After Buddhism in Jew Province had been completely destroyed; it was revived again during the Sui Dynasty (1132 – 1161 B.E.) and it reached its highest point during the Tang Dynasty (1161 – 1450 B.E.) especially during the reign of Emperor Tang Tai Jong. During this period, both the government and Buddhism prospered. Many new temples were built. Many Suttas were translated from Pali into Chinese. Most importantly, this period saw the birth of two great sages: Venerable Tang Sum Jang and Venerable I Ching.

Venerable Tang Sum Jang: He was an important Buddhist sage. The words Tang Sum Jang mean the Tripitaka scholar of the Tang Dynasty.¹⁹ He was born in the Chen family in 1143 B.E. in the city of Lo Yang and was given the name Chen Hui. Today this city is in Henan Province. Chen Hui ordained as a novice monk when he was 13 years old and his ordained name was Huan Chang or Yuan Chang or Hian Chang. He was a devoted student of the Buddhist Scriptures. But as he studied further and further, he began to have more and more questions. At the time, the number of Buddhist texts in China was limited and he could not carry out more research on his own. Therefore, he wanted to further his study in India where Buddhism originated.

In 1173 B.E., he decided to leave for India. The road to India was a dangerous not to mention difficult one in that he had to travel through extremely hot deserts and extremely cold mountains. Hundreds of Buddhist monks had been on this road before but most of them perished during their travel. For this reason, a Chinese verse was written about this road, “Ker jia seng pair kui bor juba ow jia ang jai jui jia lang” which means hundreds took the journey but less than ten made it back, how would the people of later generations ever know what hardships these travelers had to endure?²⁰

Before the journey, well-wishers had cited this poem to Venerable Tang Sum Jang but he said that he was determined to visit the sacred land and study the Dhamma and if he had to lose his life in the process, he would not regret it. The road he took went past the Taklamakan Desert whose name means entrance only but no exit. This desert is one of the most dangerous deserts in the world and the Chinese call it the Desert of Death. The venerable monk’s water canteen accidentally fell to the ground during his travel and he had to go without water for four and a half days before he arrived at an oasis.

He arrived in India after a year’s travel. He stayed in India for 19 years. He studied with Dean Silabhadara at Nalanda University for five years. Having studied the Tripitaka until he became an expert in it, the venerable monk returned to China and brought with him more than one thousand Buddhist texts. When King Tang Tai Jong learnt that the venerable monk had arrived at the Chinese border, he was so pleased that he had a procession arranged to welcome the venerable monk back as a national hero. On the day that the procession entered the city of Shiang’an, the king ordered every household on the streets where the procession would go past to set up an altar in front of the house.

¹⁹ Siriwat Kumwansa, *Buddhism in India*, 2545 B.E., p. 183-184

²⁰ Satian Potinanta, *The History of Buddhism, Oral Tradition*, vol. 1, 2539 B.E., p. 205

Venerable Tang Sum Jang spent the rest of his life translating Buddhist texts into Chinese. He had translated altogether 74 Buddhist texts and the translated Scriptures were written down in palm-leaves. There were altogether more than one thousand manuscripts. In 1183 B.E., he described the experiences of his travels in a travel journal called “Ta Tang Zi Yu Ji” which means the journal of events taking place during the great Tang Dynasty’s westward travel. This journal has been extremely useful for students of later periods and is a great handbook for surveying ancient Buddhist temples in India because the journal contains very accurate details about these places. It has served as a great guidebook. When Venerable Tang Sum Jang was 64 years old, he fell ill and passed away and the entire nation mourned his death. King Tang Kao Jong declared a three-day mourning period and two million Chinese attended the venerable monk’s funeral.²¹

The World’s First Printing of the Tripitaka: When King Tai Jo founded the Song Dynasty in 1503 B.E. he supported Buddhism by printing the world’s first Tripitaka along with the Commentary and the Sub-Commentary. China is the first country in the world to develop the printing process. The Europeans learnt about the printing process in China only 400 years later. This edition of the Tripitaka was printed on 130,000 wood panels. A copy of these wood panels is kept in the National Library of Thailand. The end of the Song Dynasty brought about the decline of Buddhism because Confucianism was becoming more influential. This happened because the Buddhist monks of later generations did not study the Dhamma in earnest; therefore, they could not teach the Dhamma to the people. Meanwhile, intellectual people turned to Confucianism because Confucius promoted education.

The Tai Peng Rebellion: During the Ching or Manchu Dynasty (2187 – 2455 B.E.), western colonialism and Christianity began to enter China. A Chinese man called Siew Chuan converted to Christianity. He and a group of men came together and called themselves Tai Peng which means great peace. These rebellions said that Jehovah ordered them to destroy Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and the Manchu Dynasty, and to create a new Christian world in China. The Tai Peng group fought for 16 years and was able to occupy a third of China and set up a new capital in Nanking. They forced the Chinese people to convert to Christianity. They destroyed Buddhist temples and Taoist shrines. They killed around twenty million people and thousands of Buddhist temples in the occupied territory were abandoned with no hope of ever being restored again.

The Period of Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s Republic: Dr. Sun Yat-sen led a revolution which changed imperial China to a republic state in 2454 B.E. He was dissatisfied with the monarchs because they were more interested in their own personal gain than the welfare of the country. During the republic period, Buddhism was at a low point. Still, there were around 738,000 Bhikkus and Bhikkunis and 267,000 temples. The intellectuals of the new generation converted to Christianity. At the time, both Christianity and the new form of government were considered modern by intellectual Chinese. This period lasted just 38 years.

²¹ Satian Potinanta, The History of Buddhism, Oral Tradition, vol. 1, 2539 B.E., p. 209-210

The Republic of China: China had another form of government in 2492 B.E. Mao Zedong, the Chinese communist leader won the civil war against Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Kuomintang Party. Chiang Kai-shek fled to Taiwan along with a number of Chinese people. Under Mao Zedong, China was ruled by Marxism. Under Marxism, Buddhism was considered society's parasite and Buddhist monks had to disrobe. Those who did not were told to work in the rice paddies or in the tea plantations. Almost every temple was closed down. Many Buddhist monks fled to Taiwan. Today, Buddhism in Taiwan is flourishing. One temple in Taiwan which has gained worldwide reputation is the Fo Guang Shan Temple. It is under the leadership of the Venerable Master Hsing Yun. Fo Guang Shan has more than 250 branches worldwide.²²

After Mao Zedong died in 2519 B.E., Deng Xiaoping became the new leader of China. Under his leadership, rules were more relaxed and Buddhism had the chance to thrive again in China. On October 15, 2546 B.E., there was an article in the newspaper stating that twenty one pieces of the Holy Relics had been found in Hua Lin Temple of Li Wan District in the city of Guangzhou. It also mentioned that the Holy Relics often appear when peace reigns over the country and disappear when the country is in turmoil. Since the time of Den Xiaoping, Buddhism in China has been gradually revived and today China has the largest population of Buddhists in the world.

The Different Buddhist Schools in China: China was the home of Mahayana Buddhism, and it later spread to other countries. Some of the important Mahayana schools in China include the Saddhampundarika School or Tien Tai, the Sukhavati School or Jeng Toe Jong, the Dhyana School or Zen. Zen Buddhism was already mentioned in Venerable Bodhidhamma's history. Here, the other two schools will be mentioned.

- 1. The Saddhampundarika School:** This school is based on the Saddhampundarika Sutta which no one knows for certain where, when and in what language it was written originally. The Sutta had been translated from Sanskrit into Chinese six times, the first time in 798 B.E. The text that is most widely accepted and studied is the one translated by Venerable Kumarajiva in 949 B.E. This Sutta became famous when Venerable Ti Jia (1081 – 1140 B.E.) of Mount Tien Tai understood the contents of the Sutta and founded the Saddhampundarika School (Huab Hua Jong) or Tien Tai School.

This school teaches that only the teachings contained in the Saddhampundarika Sutta can give everyone equal opportunity to attain Buddhahood. This school believes the Sadhampundarika Sutta to contain the most mysterious teachings revealed by the Lord Buddha to His disciples just before His attainment of Complete Nibbana.

²² Venerable Zin Ting, referenced in the Daily News (2549 B.E.), Propagation of Buddhism: Strategy Changes (online)

In Chinese, Saddhampundarika is Meow Ho Reng Nge Kiao. The words Meow Ho means the truth of Saddham. Reng Nge means white lotus or Pundarika. Kiao means Sutta. In English, this Sutta is called the Lotus Sutta.

Later, when Buddhism spread from China to Korea, and from Korea to Japan, the teachings of this school also entered these countries. The person who played an important role in spreading the teachings of this school was the Japanese monk Venerable Saijo of the Mount Hi-eh-i Monastery and Venerable Nichiren.

- 2. The Sukhavati School:** This school was founded in 945 B.E. during the Gin Dynasty by Venerable Hui Iang. This monk lived at Tang Nim Yi Temple in Mount Lu Sua, Kang Sai Province. A very large pond was dug into the mountain and filled with white lotuses. Venerable Hui Iang and thousands of his followers would chant around the pond by imagining it to be in Sukhavati where they wished to have their rebirth.

Initially, this temple practiced the teachings contained in the Buddhadhyanasagara Sutta. This Sutta teaches one to keep one's mind on Amitabha Buddha. Later, changes were made to the teachings. Even then, the teachings did not contain convoluted philosophy and were thus suitable for ordinary folks.

Venerable Shan-tao summarized the teachings of this school as follows.

1. "Sing" means belief. Instill in the people a deep faith in Amitabha Buddha.
2. "Nguang" means being determined to be reborn in Sukhavati.
3. "Heng" means practicing wholesomeness through one's body, word, and mind especially by citing Namu Amitabhaya Buddhaya as homage paid to Amitabha Buddha. In Chinese, one says Nam Bu Au Ni Tor Hud. In Japanese, one says Nam Bu Amida Boot Sir or Nambo Ayida Perk. One must recite these words as often as possible and the number of times the words are recited is counted by using a rosary.

2. Korea

In 2491 B.E., after the end of WWII, the Korean Peninsula was divided into two parts. North Korea is governed by a communist party. South Korea has a democratic form of government. North Korea's official name is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Its capital and largest city is Pyongyang. North Korea has a population of 23,113,019 (as of 2549 B.E.). Most of North Koreans do not have a religion because Communism does not promote religion. There are about 400,000 Zen Buddhists remaining (1.67%) in North Korea, a decrease from the original 23.33%. There are altogether 300 temples. And there were about 12,000 Christians (0.05%).²³

South Korea's official name is the Republic of Korea. Its capital and largest city is Seoul. South Korea has a population of 47,817,000, 25% are Buddhists, 25% are Christians, 2% subscribe to Confucianism²⁴ and 30 to 50% or 14,579,400 – 25,270,960 are atheists.²⁵ There are about 10,000 Mahayana Bhikkunis in South Korea today.²⁶ The Chinese monk, Venerable Sun Tao introduced Mahayana Buddhism to Korea in 915 B.E.

In those days, Korea was divided into three kingdoms: Ko Ku Riao, Pukja, and Silla. These kingdoms covered the areas of the Korean Peninsula and part of Manchuria from the first century B.C. until the seventh century. The rulers of these three kingdoms declared Buddhism as a state religion. In 1200 B.E., the kingdom of Silla successfully united all three kingdoms into one. Under the one kingdom, Buddhism flourished. During this period, wooden blocks were carved and used to print 1,600 pages of the Tripitaka and more than 50,000 texts.

The Silla Kingdom ruled Korea for 278 years before losing its power to the kingdom of Ko Ku Riao in 1478 B.E. Rulers of the Ko Ku Riao kingdom were Buddhists and every king had a Buddhist monk as a consultant. A large number of temples were built during this period and it became a practice that if any family had four sons, one of them had to ordain as a monk.

Since the monks in Korea are Mahayana monks, their monastic activities are very different from those in Theravada Buddhism. For example, they had to work the rice paddies, make Kim Chi, harvested fruit, etc. A large group of monks worked in the paddies at the end of June. When it was time to transplant the paddy sprouts, the monks would fold up their pant legs and remove their cloaks before forming a line. Two of the monks would hold a long rope to mark the line where the paddy sprouts were to be transplanted. They made Kim Chi for the winter. They preserved fruit and nuts such as chestnut, pine fruits, and persimmon to be consumed during the winter.

²³ Wikipedia (B.E. 2549). North Korea

²⁴ Wikipedia (B.E. 2547). South Korea

²⁵ Phil Zuckerman, (B.E. 2548) **"Atheism: Contemporary Rates and Patterns", Chapter in The Cambridge Companion to Atheism**, ed. by Michael Martin, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, U.K., Reference cited in www.adherents.com (B.E. 2548) The Largest Atheist/Agnostic Populations.

²⁶ Suchart Hongsa, *The History of Buddhism*, 2549 B.E., p. 161

Korean monks favor the use of self-mortification like that practiced by Prince Siddhattha when he first took up the religious life. They fast, eat raw food, sleep without lying down, abstain from speaking, burn their own fingers, and seek solitude by living alone in an uninhabited valley and letting their hair, beard, and mustache grow long.

Fasting is also a very popular practice in Korea. It can last from three days to two weeks. Fasting is believed to be a cure-all. Burning one's fingers is carried out as homage paid to the Lord Buddha. Some monks do it to increase their commitment to the monkhood. Some do it to avoid being drafted. But there are also others who do it to make themselves famous and be highly venerated by the lay people.

Between 1935 and 2453 B.E., the Zo Zon Dynasty came into power and designated Confucianism as the state religion. As a result, Buddhism in Korea went through a decline. These rulers forbade people to undertake ordination, and existing monks had to flee to the countryside and mountainside.

Korea came under Japanese rule in 2453 B.E., and monks were encouraged to marry and live like a householder. Japan wanted to destroy the Buddhist culture in Korea and one sure way to do this was to radically change the monks' lifestyle.

Korean Monks Entered Matrimony: Since Japan encouraged Buddhist monks in Korea to marry, a large number of Korean monks decided to comply. Initially, this was carried out quietly because the practice was still frowned upon. Sometime before this happened, someone had proposed that Buddhist monks should be able to marry but the proposal was ignored. In 2422 B.E., one Korean monk called Han Yong Kan submitted a document to the Japanese government as well as the administrators of the monastic community requesting that Buddhist monks be allowed to marry. He cited two reasons for his request.

- 1) If monks are not allowed to marry, more and more monks will disrobe. But if they are allowed to marry, they can remain in the monkhood and their children can perpetuate Buddhism to the point where it can compete with other religions. Moreover, Buddhist monks nowadays are already getting married secretly; there should be no reason for them to feel ashamed.
- 2) Venerable Han Yong Kan said that Buddhist teachings do not emphasize chastity practice. Therefore, when Buddhist monks do not practice chastity, it allows them to have more life experiences.

At the time, the government did not grant his request. It might be that so many people in Korea were still against the practice. But finally, in October 2469 B.E., the Korean monastic governing body allowed Korean monks to marry. This decision is the beginning of the split between Buddhist monks who practiced chastity and those who did not.²⁷

²⁷ Suchart Hongsa, *The History of Buddhism*, 2549 B.E., p. 116-117

Now that the Buddhist monks decided to marry, they had to face a whole set of different problems altogether. They had to earn a living in order to support their family. As a result, they had no time to study the Dhamma-Vinaya. They had no time to practice meditation. And they had no time to think about spreading the Lord Buddha's Teachings. Most importantly, they had no time to incite the people against Japanese rule. And this was exactly what Japan had wanted in the first place.

In 2488 B.E., toward the end of WWII, the Soviet army and the American army took control of Korea and divided it into North Korea and South Korea.

Once Korea was no longer under Japanese rule, Buddhist monks in South Korea had a meeting and agreed that the government should cancel all the regulations that violated Buddhist Principles. They proposed that the monastic community be allowed self-governance and the monastic governance should have offices in the capital city as well as in different provinces. They met together to write the monastic community's constitution in 2489 B.E. Since North Korea was under Communist rule which did not support any religion, there was very little religious movement in North Korea.

The religious movement in South Korea caused the cancelation of different regulations such as allowing Buddhist monks to marry, etc. This movement caused the conflicts between the monks who practiced chastity and those who did not to become more intense. Finally, in 2505 B.E., the monastic community in Korea was split into two schools: Sho Kai School and Tae Ko School. The Sho Kai School consisted of monks who practiced chastity and the Tae Ko School was made up of monks who had a family. The government supported the Sho Kai School and the Supreme Court ruled that the Sho Kai School had the right to rule every temple in the country including those of the Tae Ko School. Even so, conflicts between the two schools could not be ended.

Today, Buddhism in Korea is a combination of Zen, Amitabha Buddha, and Maitreya Bodhisattva. Buddhist monks in Korea are forward-thinking and never hesitate to adapt themselves to the modern world. Their education is aligned with government policy. The literacy rate in Korea is as high as 95%. According to the 2526 B.E. census, there are 11,130,288 Buddhists in South Korea, 7,160,704 of them are women, and 3,969,584 are men. There are 3,163 registered temples and 4,090 un-registered temples. There are 14,206 Bhikkus and 6,549 Bhikkunis. The majority of monks belong to the Sho Kai School.

South Korea has an old Buddhist university called Dong Kuk. It was built in 2449 B.E. It has nine departments which offer a Bachelor's Degree and four departments which offer graduate degrees. There are about 15,000 students. The university also offers special training programs for Bhikkus and Bhikkunis. This university hosted the translation and printing of the Korean Tripitaka in 2507 B.E. The work was led by the monastic community and the translation committee consisted of 65 members. One text was printed every month until all 240 texts were printed. The project took 45 years to complete.

There is also a Dhamma school for Bhikkus, Bhikkunis, Samaneras, and Samaneris. Householders can take these courses alongside the monks and novice monks.

The Korean monastic community also operates schools offering common education at different levels. The schools are open to male and female students and managed by householders. The schools are under the supervision of the monastic community's education committee. The educational institutions overseen by the monastic community include:

University and college	3
Senior high school	11
Junior high school	16
Elementary school	3
Kindergarten	7

Educated and capable Bhikkunis in South Korea can work alongside the Bhikkus. Korean women like to ordain as Bhikkunis between the age of 20 and 40 by starting as a Samaneri observing the Ten Precepts for two years, followed by a three to five years' college education. Afterward, they ordain as Bhikkunis observing 368 Precepts. Bhikkunis are governed by the monastic governing body and there is harmony between Bhikkus and Bhikkunis in Korea. The abbot of a Bhikkuni temple is a Bhikkuni.

3. Japan

Japan's capital and largest city is Tokyo. Japan has a population of 128,085,000 (as of 2548 B.E.). There are about 89,650,000 Buddhists in Japan. Japan has the second largest Buddhist population in the world next to China. The history of Buddhism in Japan can be divided into six periods: the first period, the Nara period, the first Shogun period, the Civil War period, the isolationism period, the Meiji period up to the present.

The First Period: Buddhism from China entered Japan via Korea in 1095 B.E. during the reign of King Kim Meiji. At the time, King Se Ma Woe of the kingdom of Kadura in Korea sent a brass Buddha Image covered with gold and some Buddhist texts to King Kim Meiji along with the message, "This is the best religion that I've ever known and I do not want it confined to Korea only. Please accept this religion as your own."²⁸ The Japanese emperor was pleased because he had never known such wonderful teachings before. Ever since then a limited number of Japanese people began to subscribe to Buddhism but the majority of the people still believed in the Shinto religion.

During the reign of Empress Suiko around 1135 to 1171 B.E., Buddhism in Japan flourished. The empress ceded the throne to her grandson, Prince Umayado, in order to ordain as a Bhikkuni. The Prince was later named Shotoku Taishi.

Prince Shotoku declared Buddhism as the state religion. He had built around 400 temples in his time. He was learnt in the Tripitaka and he was the author of three important Mahayana Commentary Suttas: the Saddhampundarika Sutta, the Vimakakiratinidesa Sutta, and the Srimaladevisinhanada Sutta. His hand-written Suttas have been well preserved up to the present time. The country's laws and regulations were legislated based on Buddhist Principles. Because of his prolific work in Buddhism, the prince was called Asoka of Japan.

The prince's Buddhism was called Ekayana and its aim was Dhammakaya. The teachings were a mixture of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. There was no division between monks and householders in that everyone could practice meditation in their daily life. When the prince passed away in 1165 B.E., the entire nation mourned his death. Japanese Buddhists built a Buddha Image the size of the prince to commemorate his virtues.

The Nara Period: Buddhism flourished in Japan since the time of Prince Shotoku and Buddhist practices became part of the Japanese culture. During the Nara period, around 1253 to 1327 B.E., Buddhism flourished even further. Nara, the capital of Japan in those days, was called the city of a thousand temples because there was a Buddhist temple on every road. More and more Japanese sages went to study Buddhism in China during this period, and had brought the teachings of six different Buddhist schools back to Japan.²⁹

²⁸ Satian Potinanta, **The History of Buddhism, Oral Tradition**, vol. 1, 2539 B.E., p. 268

²⁹ These included the Zaron School (Madyamika/Mahayana), the Hoss Zo School (Yogacara/Mahayana), the Kay Ngon School (Avatamska/Mahayana), the Ritsu School (Vinaya/Theravada), the Kucha School (Saravastivadina/Theravada), and the Jojitsu School (Theravada)

In 1284 B.E., Emperor Di Cho Mu ordered a temple built in each province. During this period, the monastic community received gains and recognition because it was supported by the government. As a result, a large number of people entered the monkhood for selfish reasons. Moreover, the monastic community had power over the government. The monks ended up neglecting meditation practice, and Buddhism suffered. The emperor wanted to lessen the political power of the monastic community; therefore, he moved the capital from Nara to Kyoto (Hey An). The six schools of Buddhism no longer received support from the monarchy. As a result, Buddhism went through a decline.

The Kyoto or Hey An Period (1337 – 1728 B.E.): Venerable Saijo and Venerable Kukai went to study in China and brought Buddhism back to Japan. Venerable Saijo set up his monastic community at Mount Hi-eh-i in 1328 B.E. in order to spread the teachings of the Tendai or Tiantai School. This is the same as the Saddhampundarika School. The monks of this school carried weapons to protect themselves during wartimes. Venerable Kukai returned to spread the teachings of the Shin Ngon or Tantric Buddhism. The government in this period supported Buddhism and nearly every Emperor undertook ordination for a time. At the end of this period, war erupted. A warlord called Yorimoto of the Minamoto family attacked Kyoto and Nara and seized power from the emperor. He burnt down a large number of temples. During that period, Buddhist monks in some temples had an army to protect the temple and some groups of monks even went into battle in order to gain political power. However, Yorimoto was able to quell them all.

The First Shogun Family: The word “Shogun” means the army’s commander-in-chief. The first Shogun in Japan was Yorimoto. After he had successfully attacked Kyoto and Nara in 1728 B.E., he established the city of Kamakura as the command center of the Shogun military government. He was appointed by the emperor as Seiitai Shogun. Buddhism had suffered because of the war but devout Buddhists were still trying to revive it. At the time there were three important Buddhist schools: the Jodo School, the Zen School, and the Nichiren School.

1. **The Jodo or Sukhavati School:** Venerable Honen founded this school during the Kamakura period. On one occasion, he read in the Commentary’s Amitayuradhayana Sutta that if a person can consistently recall and say the name of Amitabha Buddha anytime anywhere, this action is considered to be Sammakammanta or Right Action because one is bearing in mind the sacredness of Amitabha Buddha. Venerable Honen was so impressed with this passage that he opted to stop all other practices except for the frequent recitation of “Nambu amida budser”. He was convinced that this action alone could lead to rebirth in Sukhavati where Amitabha Buddha is. He started to let others know about his conviction and in no time many people were emulating him.
2. **The Zen School:** Venerable Yosai and Venerable Doken went to study at Mount Hi-eh-i before going to China to study the teachings of the Zen School. They brought Zen teachings back to Japan. Venerable Yosai built the Zofukuji Temple in 1734 B.E. in Kamakura in the island of Kyushu as the center for propagating the Rinzaizen School. And Venerable Doken built the Eh-i-hey-i-ji Temple as the center for propagating the Zotozen School.

As mentioned before, Zen Buddhism emphasizes meditation practice in order to attain the Jhanas or Zazen. Zen Buddhism does not favor the use of words or Dhamma lessons. The school's slogan is "Puk lip boon yi tik gee nang sim kiang sae seng hud" which means requiring no alphabets but going straight to the human mind to penetrate the truth and attain Buddhahood. The difference between the two Zen schools is that in Rinzaizen, the teacher employs different harsh methods to waken the student so that he can penetrate truth. The teacher may shout at the student loudly. He may cane the student while the student is practicing meditation. Etc. In Zotozen, the teacher trains the student to look at truth from different angles and see that these different angles are one and the same because they are inseparable.

3. The Nichiren School: The teachings of this school are based on the Saddhampundarika Sutta. The school was founded by Venerable Nichiren. This monk was born on February 16, 1765 B.E., and he entered the monkhood when he was 16 years old. Having studied the Dhamma for ten years, he came to the conclusion that only the teachings contained in the Saddhampundarika Sutta were correct and true.

This school teaches believers to have a deep faith in the Saddhampundarika Sutta. Believers are taught to cite "Na mu miao ho reng nge kiao" as homage paid to the Sutta. During the recitation, one must realize that Buddhahood exists within oneself. Such practice can lead one to eliminate self-illusion and attain the Dhamma.

Nichiren was strong-headed and spread his teachings by attacking the teachings of other Buddhist schools. He called Honen, the founder of the Sukhavati School, a hell being. He also said that citing "Nambu amida budser" is the way which leads one to hell. He was also in the habit of criticizing the government. He recommended his own form of governance to the government and threatened that if the government did not do as he suggested, disasters would strike the country. Nichiren was a much hated person. He had been twice deported and twice ambushed.

The Civil War Period: The first Shogun family Minamoto ruled Japan for 28 years before the power went to the Hojo family, Yorimoto's in-laws in 1756 B.E.

Imperial power was restored for a brief period from 1876 to 1881 B.E. before it was taken over by another Shogun family. This time it was the Achika-nga family of Muromaji in Kyoto. After being in power for more than 200 years, the civil war broke out. The war was fought among Japan's military leaders. One of the military leaders was Oda Nobunaga. He trained his men to use the guns purchased from a Portuguese trader near the end of the 21st century B.E. His army was superior to all the other armies and in the end he became the victor.

During the civil war, Buddhism suffered terribly. Buddhist monks had to take up weapons to fight the soldiers. They used the monastery of the Tendai School on Mount Hi-eh-i as their command center. Oda Nobunaga ordered more than 30,000 soldiers to surround Mount Hi-eh-i and attack the monastery from all sides. He ordered the soldiers to kill every monk and every villager including women and children and to burn the monastery and every house to the ground. From that moment on, Oda Nobunaga's soldiers burnt every temple that might pose as a threat to the regime. As a result, around 3,000 temples had been burnt to the ground.

Having destroyed the monks' army, Oda Nobunaga encouraged the Portuguese Jesuits to spread Catholicism in Japan. It spread quickly and Oda Nobunaga himself converted to Catholicism. He ruled Japan for 48 years before he was killed in 2125 B.E. by Akeji Mitsuhidei, his close army general. The murder came about because Oda Nobunaga caused the general to lose face in front of other army officers. But Akeji Mitsuhidei was also murdered later by Toyotomi Hideiyochi, a close army officer of Oda Nobunaga.

Toyotomi Hideiyochi took over the Shogun position from Nobunaga. He united Japan into one country in 2133 B.E. Initially, he supported the work of the western missionaries. One day, a western soldier was heard bragging in the saloon that his government depends on the Catholic priests to lead its way to colonial power. Therefore, whichever country has a large number of Catholics; that country is already a colony figuratively speaking. In times of war, these Catholics can serve as their spies to help his government attack their own country. When this comment was relayed to Hideiyochi, he had Catholicism in Japan eradicated.

The Isolationism Period: After Hideiyoshi died, Tokungava Ieyasu came into power and he moved the government seat to Edo (Tokyo). He established his Shogun government in 2146 B.E. The Tokungva government ruled Japan for 260 years. During this period, Japan traded with the West but Catholic priests and Catholics were brutally treated. Some were executed. Some were burnt at stake. Catholics' possessions were confiscated. Later, all westerners were chased out of the country and no foreigners were allowed in Japan except for certain groups that had been given special permission. Japan closed its door to outsiders. Buddhism could not flourish, since the government favored Confucianism.

The Meiji Period Up to the Present Time: Japan isolated itself for about 250 years. It re-opened its door after the visit from an American envoy in 2396 B.E. The Shogun government was very weak and became powerless during the reign of Emperor Meiji (2411 – 2455 B.E.).³⁰ After just thirty years of emulating the West, Japan became a highly developed country. It became Europe of the East and was powerful economically and militarily. They had the military might to sink the entire Russian navy in the Sea of Japan.

³⁰ This was the same period as King Rama V of Thailand.

The Shinto religion became popular during this period. It taught that the emperor is the reincarnation of a Deva. Buddhism went through a decline and no new Buddhist Schools were established. No new Buddhist temples were built. And all of the ceremonies and sacred objects of Buddhism were removed from the imperial court. Buddhist temples were converted into schools or factories. Nuns were forced to have a husband. These political pressures caused Buddhists to become more proactive in order to ensure the survival of Buddhism in Japan.

1. They built school and/or technical college inside some large temples.
2. They built Buddhist universities by putting together the funds of several large temples or the funds of different Buddhist Schools such as Tendai School and Chin School. The funds collected were enough to build altogether thirteen universities. One of these was Otani University.
3. They contributed to public services by building hospitals, institutions for the care of the disabled, institutions for the care of youth, and forming an organization that helped people who were laid off to find work again. Several large temples joined hands to fund businesses and factories, and the gains received from these investments were used to fund the work of Buddhism.
4. They promoted Buddhist research and printed the most famous edition of the Tripitaka called the Tai Sho edition. They printed a large number of Buddhist texts, several millions annually. These efforts promoted knowledge in Buddhism among the Japanese.

These efforts caused Buddhism to revive so quickly that the government did not dare interfere with it, thereby ending the attacks on Buddhism. After WWII, General MacArthur put an end to the Shinto religion deeming it to promote warlike mentality and the penchant for war. The ideals of Buddhism and the Shinto religion had clashed for the past one thousand years; suddenly, Buddhism no longer had to compete with the Shinto religion. Still, the influence of the Shinto religion cannot be completely removed from the Japanese souls.

Today, a new and fiercer competitor than the Shinto religion is the ever-increasing popularity of western culture. Western culture promotes materialism, physical comfort, convenience, and fun to the exclusion of religion. Youth today spend more time talking on the mobile phone, surfing the Internet, playing computer games, cruising department stores than reading school books. Many play computer games until the wee hours of the morning and there have been news about children dropping dead right in front of the computer monitor. How can the youth today find time for Buddhism when they cannot even find time for sleep?

Today, Japanese people subscribe to both Buddhism and the Shinto religion. There are many Buddhist schools and the most important five are:

- 1. The Tendai or Tiantai or Saddhampundarika School:** It was founded by Venerable Saijo. He named the school after the name of the mountain in China where he studied.
- 2. The Chin-ngon or Tantra School:** It was founded by Venerable Kukai about the same time that the Tendai School was founded. This school teaches the Mahavairojana Sutta and holds Vairojana Buddha to be the most sacred. This school also blends its teachings with those of the Shinto religion to the point where it could take over many Shinto temples.
- 3. The Jodo or Sukhavati School:** It was founded by Honen. This school teaches that Sukhavati is the land of lasting happiness and this land can be reached by calling the name of Amitabha Buddha. This school has been split into many minor schools such as the Jodochin School founded by Chinran. Jodochin means authentic Sukhavati. Its motto is “Hishohishoku” which means no monks, no householders. Monks in this school can marry, consume meat, and live just like a householder.
- 4. The Zen School:** It emphasizes meditation practice in order to attain the Jhanas or Zazen. Individuals of high birth and warriors favor this school. This school produces one important Zen academician, Dr. D.T. Suzuki (2433 – 2509 B.E.). He wrote many books and translated Buddhist texts into English. He was responsible for making Zen Buddhism known to the West.
- 5. The Nichiren School:** It was founded by Venerable Nichiren. This school adheres to the Saddhampundarika Sutta and shows their devotion by citing “Na mu miao ho reng nge kiao” (Namo saddhammapundarika suttassa which means paying homage to the Saddhampundarika Sutta). It teaches that as one cites these words with the feeling that the Buddha element dwells inside one’s mind, one will be able to attain Enlightenment.

Soka Gakkai is the largest and most influential group of the Nichiren School with more than twelve million members in 190 countries.³¹ The organization is led by Daizaku Ikeda. The term Soka Gakkai means the society of creative values.

The strategy used to spread the teachings of this school is called Shakubuku which means destroy and dominate. That is, destroy the people’s original religious beliefs by pointing out the shortcomings of those beliefs. Dominate by converting the people to the Nichiren School after they have totally lost faith in their old beliefs. To join this school, one must first destroy all the objects of worship of the former religion and go to a Nichiren temple to attend a 25-minute ceremony. At the end of which, one receives Ngohonvon and brings it back to one’s home as a new object of worship. One then cites “Na mu miao ho reng nge kiao” every day, five times in the morning and three times in the evening.

³¹ SGI. (B.E. 2549) Soka Gakkai International.

This organization emphasizes teamwork. Members must stand together as a team and the team is strong and stable because of their shared faith. An individual is merely part of the whole and the part derives its meaning from helping the whole perform work.

This school builds what is called state within state in that twenty to thirty families join together to form a squad. Six squads form a company and ten companies form a district. Several districts become a religion chapter. Members meet together regularly in order to exchange their religious experiences with each other.

They have summer school for the youth where the Dhamma is taught and books containing the Nichiren School's principles are distributed. An annual exam at different levels is held and those who pass the exam will receive a certificate of qualification.

Today, Soka Gakkai plays an important role in Japanese politics because one leading member of this school is the secretariat of the political party Komeito. The party's policy is Buddhist style democracy. This political party grows very quickly and is now the third most influential political party in the country.

4. Tibet

Tibet is situated on the highest plateau in the world; it is therefore called the rooftop of the world. Today, Tibet is under Chinese rule. It became part of the People's Republic of China in 2494 B.E. The leader of Tibet, the Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso went into exile in 2502 B.E., along with 80,000 Tibetans. Since then, the Dalai Lama has been living in Dharamsala in northern India. And Dharamsala became the seat of the Tibetan political administration in exile.

In the past and long before the Chinese invasion, Tibet was called the Land of Dhamma. There are some remnants of this image left in Tibet today, albeit the image is quite gloomy. Tibetans have a strong preference for the monkhood and in Tibetan's capital Lhasa, half of the population are monks. There are also a large number of monks outside the capital city. There are thousands of monks in each temple. There are 7,000 monks in the Sera Temple, 5,000 monks in the Kai Pung Temple, and 3,000 monks in the Kan Dan Temple. Tibetans consider these three temples the pillars of Tibet. The reason for such a large number of monks in Tibet is due to the fact that it is a Tibetan tradition that at least one son in each Tibetan family ordains for life.

In their view, religion is not only about a set of rules that must be followed but it is also part of their lifestyle. That is, religion becomes part of their daily life. Venerable Sangharakkhita said that Buddhism in Tibet is a lifestyle, and everything about a Tibetan's life has to do with Buddhism. Their environment is Buddhism. Buddhism is reflected in every molecule of Tibetan land.³²

Chanting is very important to Tibetans especially the well-known mantra of compassion, Om mani padme hum. Tibetans believe that if they can chant this mantra 600,000 times, they can attain Nibbana. Each Tibetan carries a rosary consisting of 108 beads to help them with their chanting. The influence of Buddhism makes Tibetans a gentle and compassionate people. It is difficult to imagine that in the past Tibetans were once a fierce people and at times even practiced cannibalism.

During the Lord Buddha's time, Tibet was part of India. It was in the Mahavana Forest of the kingdom of Kosala and near the city of Kapilavastu whose northern part extended to the Himalayas. The Lord Buddha taught the Mahasamaya Sutta and the Madhupindika Sutta at the Mahavana Forest. Therefore, Buddhism was in Tibet since the Lord Buddha's time. During the reign of Asoka the Great, he sent nine different groups of Dhamma envoys to spread Buddhism in different lands. The group led by Venerable Majjhima Thera went to teach Buddhism in the area near the Himalayas which is now Tibet.³³

In 976 B.E., King Ladho Dhorj Yentse (900 – 1100 B.E.) received gifts in the forms of Buddhist texts and Buddha Images from a representative of India. He was the first Tibetan king to become a Buddhist. Buddhism was not widely accepted, since the Bon³⁴ religion was still strong in Tibet during this period.

³² Venerable Mahasomjin Sammapanno, **Buddhist Civilization in Tibet**, 2547 B.E., p. 149

³³ Venerable Mahasomjin Sammapanno, **Buddhist Civilization in Tibet**, 2547 B.E., p. 20

³⁴ Bon means chanting the mantra. It is a form of Animism which subscribes to the belief that non-human beings are spiritual beings or at least embody some kind of life-principle.

When King Zongzen Kampo ascended the throne (1160 – 1241 B.E.), Tibet attacked China and took control of the city of Szechuan. King Tang Tai Jong of China wanted to form a diplomatic tie with Tibet and offered Princess Bun Seng Kong Ju to the Tibetan king. Later, when Tibet invaded Nepal, the king of Nepal also formed a diplomatic tie with Tibet by offering Princess Karukatidevi to the Tibetan king. Both princesses took Buddhist texts and Buddha Images to Tibet with them and they encouraged their husband to convert to Buddhism.

King Zongzen Kampo sent a court advisor called Tonme Sambhota along with 12 men to study Buddhism at Nalanda University in India. Tonme and his men brought back the Sanskrit language and used it as the basis for Tibetan alphabets and grammar. They also translated Buddhist texts from Sanskrit into Tibetan. As a result, more and more Tibetans began to study Buddhism. In 1173 B.E., King Zongzen Kampo declared Buddhism Tibetan's state religion. He built many important Buddhist structures such as the Potala Palace, the Jokang Temple, etc.

After King Zongzen Kampo passed away, the Bon religion became influential once again by boasting about its supernatural powers. After King Dharizong Detzen ascended the throne (1333 – 1401 B.E.), he invited Venerable Gurupadamasambhava of the Mantrayana School who was an expert in magical spells and incantations to quell the Bon religion. The monk took more than a year to do this. Afterward, he founded the Nyiangma or Red Hat School and built the Samye Temple as the center for propagating Buddhism.

In addition, King Dharizong Detzen invited twelve Saravasativadma monks to ordain five chosen Tibetan men. Later, 300 Tibetan men and women undertook ordination. The king decreed different laws to support the monks and novice monks. He had laid down a strong foundation for Buddhism in Tibet.

King Dhari Ralpashen (1409 – 1444 B.E.) was the next Tibetan king. He was a devout Buddhist and would let his hair down for the monks to sit on as they sat around his person giving him a Dhamma lecture. He appointed a large number of Buddhists as government officials. He exacted punishment on those who disrespected Buddhist monks. Many adherents of the Bon religion or those who suffered material losses as a result of the king's policies became intensely dissatisfied and the king was eventually assassinated.

Buddhism in Tibet flourished for a long time because it had received support from every king. When King Lang Darma ascended the throne (1444 – 1449 B.E.), he was an adherent of the Bon religion; therefore, he tried to destroy Buddhism. He forced the monks to disrobe and the monks had to flee to the countryside. One particular monk could not endure the king's action. So he dressed himself in black and wearing a black hat, he walked among the people. At the right moment, the king was assassinated.

During 1577 – 1581 B.E., Tibet invited Venerable Dipankarasrijjhana, Dean of Vikramasila University in India to help transform Buddhism and establish Lamaism in Tibet. During the sixteenth century B.E., many people were sent to study Buddhism at Nalanda University. Buddhist texts were translated into Tibetan. Temples were built. And many Buddhist sages from India were invited to Tibet. Buddhism in Tibet flourished once again.

At the end of the eighteenth century B.E., Venerable Tsonkhapa built the Kandan Temple and founded the Gelug or Yellow Hat School. The objective was to strictly practice the Vinaya because most of the Lamas of the Nyiangma School were lax and they had their wife and children in the temple. Such practice was strictly forbidden in the Gelug School. In addition, Venerable Tsonkhapa collected all the Buddhist texts that had been translated into Tibetan and put them into two categories: the Lord Buddha's Sayings, these made up 100 texts; and the Commentary, 225 texts. These texts were called the Tripitaka or the Tibetan version of Buddhist Scriptures. These texts are still in use today. Venerable Tsonkhapa's disciples had built three large temples: The Sera Temple, the Kaipung Temple, and the Tshilumpo Temple. Importantly, Venerable Tsonkhapa was the person who started the concept of transmission of power through reincarnation.

The Birth of Dalai Lama: Between the end of the 21st century B.E. and the beginning of the 22nd century B.E., Altan Khan of Mongolia invaded Tibet and had the opportunity to meet with Sonam Gyatso, the third Supreme Patriarch of the Gelug School. He became a believer and bestowed upon Sonam Gyatso the title of Dalai. This title was also conferred retroactively upon the first and second Supreme Patriarch. During the period of the fourth Dalai Lama, the Gelug School flourished because it received support from the Mongolian troops.

During the time of the fifth Dalai Lama, Lobsang Gyatso (2158 – 2223 B.E.), a power struggle for the throne erupted in the city of Lhasa. Kujri Khan, leader of the Mongols subdued the situation and subsequently gave both the political power and religious power to Lobsang Gyatso, the fifth Dalai Lama. That was how the Dalai Lama became the political as well as the religious leader of the country. Lobsang Gyatso had done much to convert the Mongols to Buddhism. He also made additions to the Potala palace.

The current fourteenth Dalai Lama is called Tenzin Gyatso. He has been living in exile in Dharamsala, India, where he has his political administration ever since Tibet came under Chinese rule in 2494 B.E. He left Tibet in 2502 B.E. His exile caused Tibetan Buddhism to be known all throughout the world especially in the West. In the U.S. today, there are about five million Tibetan Buddhists, the majority of whom belong to the Gelug or Yellow Hat School.³⁵

³⁵ Suchart Hongsa, *The History of Buddhism*, 2549 B.E., p. 157

The current Dalai Lama visited Thailand in 2536 B.E. in order to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. The Chinese government issued a warning to Thailand telling it not to issue a visa to the Dalai Lama, since he had been involved in the separatist movement in China. Nonetheless, Thailand issued the Dalai Lama a visa, since it deemed itself a Buddhist country and saw no reason why a Buddhist monk could not enter the country unless he was there to cause troubles. However, due to the pressure from China, once the Dalai Lama arrived in Thailand, no temples dared provide him with lodging except for Venerable Pannananda of Wat Chonlapratarn. In the end, Wat Bovornnivesviharn, which was the residence of the Supreme Patriarch in Thailand, invited him to stay there.

Today, Mahayana Buddhism in Tibet is called Vajrayana or Tantric Buddhism. Tantric Buddhism has four important schools, namely, Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug.

1. The Nyingma School was founded by Guru Padamasambhava. He categorized Buddhist teachings into Navayana.³⁶ Monks in this school wear a red hat.
2. The Kagyu School was founded by Masters Tungpo Naljor and Marpachoki Lodo. The school is based on the four branches of Tantric Buddhism which include physical mirage, the perpetuation of souls, dreams, and brightness. This school is sometimes called the Black Hat School because during rituals, monks generally wear a black hat.
3. The Sakya School was founded by Venerable Konjok Jelpo. The school is based on thirteen golden Dhamma teachings and Lamdre, the Path and Fruit Principle. It is the combination of purity and emptiness in that there can be no separation between Samsara and Nibbana. Monks in this school wear a multicolored hat.
4. The Gelug School was founded by Master Tsongkhapa. The school is known for its strict discipline. The study of Sutta and Tantra is by way of logic and debate.³⁷ Monks in this school wear a yellow hat.

³⁶ Navayana means nine vehicles. The first three vehicles include Savayana, Paccekabuddhayana, and Bodhisattvayana. The three Tantras include Kiritantra (right physical practice), Upatantra (practice meditation by focusing on the Lord Buddha and the Bodhisattva), and Yogatantra (development of mental power as taught by Vajrasattva). The three high Tantras include Mahayoga (practice meditation in order to arrive at non-attachment), Anuyoga (practice meditation in order to become one with Vajarakaya), and Atiyoga (practice meditation in order to arrive at the highest step which is to transcend the Lokiya realm as taught by Samantabhadra Buddha).

³⁷ Monks of this school will pair up and practice logic and debate by taking turn in posing a question and obtaining a clear and quick answer.

The Potala Palace: It was a small palace when it was first built but additions had been made to it all throughout the following one hundred years until it became a huge palace covering the entire mountain. The Potala Palace is the heart of all Tibetans. Its roof is covered with gold shingles and decked with rows of stupas covered with gold. There are more than 1,000 rooms in the palace. Housed within the palace are the Parliament hall, the monks' college and the medical college. Every Tibetan, who comes to visit the palace, will kneel down and chant as soon as they see the gold spire of the palace.

The Jokang Temple: It is the first temple built in Tibet. Tibetans consider it a holy place and they dream of making a pilgrimage there at least once in their life. King Songsen Kampo built the Jokang Temple in order to house the Jovosakyamuni Image, the most important Buddha image in Tibet. The Image was brought to Tibet by the king's Nepalese queen. Today, the Jokang Temple is just as important as ever. Each day and at all hours, close to a thousand pilgrims can be seen chanting while circumambulating it.

The Pilgrims: Each year a large number of pilgrims visit many holy places of Tibet especially the Potala Palace. For Tibetans, pilgrimage made to the Jokang Temple is their highest wish in life and many put their lives on the line to do it. Tibetans undertake the pilgrimage on foot and many die before they arrive at the Jokang Temple because they have to endure changing and drastic climate conditions where temperature can at times drop to -40 Celsius.

The Road to Enlightenment: Danju was one of the pilgrims that trekked to the Jokang Temple. He undertook the pilgrimage in order to cleanse his father's sin of abandoning the family since his childhood. The distance between his house in Qinghai and the Joka Temple is over 2,000 kilometers. This was a highly challenging endeavor. Joma and Baima, his mother and sister, went along to help take care of him. Danju chanted as he took one step forward and fell prostrate in worship on stones, gravels, ice, and snow. Only his deep faith moved him forward. He did not think about his destination. His only thought was about the purpose and the meaning of his action each time he prostrated himself. To him the pilgrimage was like being on the road of Enlightenment. The high elevation of more than 4,000 meters and the frigid condition exhausted all three people. However, after more than two years of grueling effort, they finally made it to their destination. Joma could only sit down and weep at the sight of the Potala's spires. Danju spent the entire day chanting and worshipping every Buddha Image in the Jokang Temple. Each prostration here means the end of his great pilgrimage. Upon the family's return to their village, all the villagers came out to greet them. The senior monk of the See Temple in Chinghai accepted Danju as a Lama, thus Dan Ju's highest hope was fulfilled.³⁸

³⁸ The History Channel (B.E. 2549) A documentary on "The Road to Enlightenment"

5.2.3 Buddhism in Southeast Asia

The countries in Southeast Asia include Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and all of the island countries such as the Philippines, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, and East Timor. The countries in which the majority of the people are Buddhists include Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Burma. The people in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei are Moslems. The majority of the people in the Philippines and East Timor are Christians. Here, only the history of Buddhism in Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Burma, and Vietnam will be mentioned.

1. Thailand

Thailand's official name is the Kingdom of Thailand. Currently, the country's form of government is constitutional monarchy but it was under military rule in 2549 B.E. Thailand has a population of 62,418,054 (as of 2548 B.E.), 95% are Theravada Buddhists, 3% are Moslems, and 2% are Christians.

Buddhism entered Thailand around 236 B.E., during the reign of Asoka the Great through the group of Dhamma envoys led by Venerable Sona Thera and Venerable Uttara Thera. They came to spread Buddhism in the land called Suvarnabhumi. Thailand at the time was part of Suvarnabhumi. The word "Suvarnabhumi" means the land of gold. The exact location of Suvarnabhumi is still not known, and archaeologists differ in opinions about where Suvarnabhumi might have been.

1. Indian archaeologists: 90% of Indian archaeologists believe that Suvarnabhumi was the Malay Peninsula and it consisted of the southernmost part of Burma, the south of Thailand, the Malay Peninsula, and Singapore. Local history indicated that in ancient times, this region contained a large amount of gold. It was said that people used to gamble with gold chips; and at a cockfight, gold the size of a cock was used as bet.
2. Indian archaeologists: 10% of Indian archaeologists believe that Suvarnabhumi was located on the eastern shore of southern India.
3. Burmese archaeologists: They believe Suvarnabhumi to be in the middle and southern parts of Burma.
4. Thai archaeologists: They believe the center of Suvarnabhumi to be in Nakorn Pathom Province in Thailand.

Nonetheless, it is agreed that Suvarnabhumi encompassed a very large area. One Thai historian said that there were many tribes living in Suvarnabhumi. These included Mon, Burmese, Lava, Malay, Khmer, etc.³⁹

³⁹ Siriwat Kumwansa, *The History of Buddhism in Thailand*, 2542 B.E., p. 12-16

The Dvaravati Kingdom: Having accepted Theravada Buddhism since the time of Asoka the Great, the Thai people have been adherents of Theravada Buddhism all throughout its history. During the Dvaravati period, about the 11th to the 13th century B.E., Nakorn Pathom was its capital city. Buddhism flourished during this period judging from a large number of ancient Buddhist artifacts and structures remained in the area. White stone Buddha Images have been found, three in Nakorn Pathom and one in Ayutthaya. There are many ancient Buddhist structures in Nakorn Pathom itself such as the Pathom Cetiya.

The Srivijaya Kingdom: This kingdom had been around between the 11th and 19th century B.E. It covered a vast area from the end of the Malay Peninsula to the island of Java. Evidence about the center of this kingdom has not been found but Dr. Well said that Palembang on the island of Sumatra was Srivijaya's capital whereas Venerable Buddhadasa thought it was in Chaiya of Suratthani Province in Thailand.

A stone tablet was found at Wat Semamueng in Nakorn Sri Thammaraj which indicated that the king of Srivijaya was an adherent of Mahayana Buddhism. Other evidences were also found. In 1214 B.E., Venerable I Ching came from China to study Buddhism in Srivijaya for six months before traveling on to India. He advised other Chinese monks to do the same because Srivijaya was almost as famous as India in terms of Mahayana Buddhism education.⁴⁰

The Lobburi Kingdom: Around the 15th to the 16th century B.E., the Suryavarman Dynasty of Cambodia extended its power along the valleys of the Chao Phraya River and the Mula River. It defeated the kingdom of Dvaravati and established many cities such as Lobburi, Sukhothai, Srithep (Petchaboon), Pimai, and Sakon Nakorn with Lobburi being the most important city. People of the Lobburi Kingdom practiced a mixture of Mahayana Buddhism from Cambodia and Theravada Buddhism from the Dvaravati period. Many religious structures were erected during this period. These included Phra Prang Sam Yod, Prasat Hin Phimai, and Prasat Hin Khao Phanom Rung, etc.

The Sukhothai Kingdom: Around 1800 B.E., the chief of a group of Thai people called Pho Khun Bang Klang Hao declared independence and chased the ruling Khmers (Cambodians) out. He established Sukhothai as his capital and crowned himself king using the name of Pho Khun Sri Indraditya. He was the first king of Siam. Three religions were present during this period: Brahmanism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Theravada Buddhism. However, Pho Khun Sri Indraditya preferred Theravada Buddhism. In 1822 B.E., Pho Khun Ram Kham Haeng ascended the throne as the third king of Sukhothai. During this period, the kingdom flourished politically and religiously.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 22

Pho Khun Ram Kham Haeng invited Buddhist monks from Nakorn Sri Thammaraj who had gone to study Buddhism in Sri Lanka to come to Sukhothai to teach Theravada Buddhism. The Sangha in those days were divided into two groups: The Gamavasi Group that studied the Dhamma, and the Arannavasi Group that emphasized meditation practice. The people of Sukhothai were devout Buddhists according to the stone tablet inscriptions.

Buddhism reached its height during the reign of Pho Khun Ram Kham Haeng's grandson, King Mahadhammarajalithai who ascended the throne around 1890 B.E. He was the first king who was learnt in the Tripitaka as well as the Magadha language. He wrote one piece of Buddhist literature called "Tri Bhumi Phra Ruang" in 1888 B.E. It is said to be the oldest Thai literary work. References for this work came from 34 stories found in the Buddhist Scriptures. He built the reliquary in the ancient city of Nakorn Chum (which is now part of Kampaeng Phet) and cast the Buddha Images of Phitsanulok called Buddha Jinasiha and Buddha Jinaraj. In 1905 B.E., the king undertook ordination for a time. On the fifth stone tablet, it was inscribed that King Litai aspired to Buddhahood and he wished to bring living beings across Samsara to Nibbana.⁴¹ When the king was a devout Buddhist, it caused his subjects to follow in his example; therefore, Buddhism flourished.

The Lanna Kingdom: It was established in 1840 B.E. by Phraya Mengrai. He was a good friend of Pho Khun Ram Kham Haeng and Phya Ngam Muang of Phayao. Phya Mengrai built his city on the slopes of Mount Deva Banpot (currently Doi Suthep) and named it Chiangmai which means the new city. The king and his subjects were Theravada Buddhists. During the reign of King Tilokaraj (1885 – 2020 B.E.) and Lanna's golden age, Buddhism reached its height. In 1885 B.E., the king sponsored the ordination of 500 men. He also sponsored the eighth Sangiti. Buddhism flourished and the government was strong.

During the reign of King Yot Chiang Rai who ruled from 2038 to 2068 B.E., he sponsored the ordination of more than 1,200 men. King Yot Chiang Rai was King Tilokaraj's grandson. During the Lanna period, Buddhist monks were learnt in the Pali Scriptures and more Pali texts were written in this period than in any other periods past and present. Altogether 32 Pali texts were written and some of these texts are still being used by Buddhist monks today. These include Mangalattadhipani, Jinakalamalipakarana, etc. Even the Bahunga Incantation was written during this period. It is still being chanted today by Thai and Sri Lankan monks.

⁴¹ Referenced by Siriwat Kumwansa, *The History of Buddhism in Thailand*, 2542 B.E., p. 29-33

The Ayutthaya Kingdom: King U Thong or Ramathipbodi I founded the capital city of Ayutthaya on April 3, 1893 B.E., during the time that the Sukhothai Kingdom was going through a decline. Sukhothai eventually came under Ayutthaya rule in 1921 B.E. Ayutthaya had prospered for 417 years under 33 different kings. Ayutthaya was a place of abundance as reflected in the saying, “There are fish in the water and rice in the paddies.” The city of Ayutthaya is replete with temples, castles, palaces, ancient structures, and ancient artifacts.

King U Thong built two temples, Wat Phutthaisawan and Wat Yai Chai Monkol. Buddhism reached its height during the reign of King Barom Trilokanat who was the eighth king of Ayutthaya. He ruled Ayutthaya between 1991 and 2031 B.E. He had built and renovated many temples. In 2008 B.E., he undertook ordination for a time and so did 2,388 government officials and members of the royal household.

King Ramathipbodi II had a huge Buddha Image cast in gold. The Buddha Image was called Phra Si Sanphet. The gold Buddha Image weighed 31.8 tons and covered with an additional 171.6 kilograms of gold. Buddhism continued to be supported by the kings of Ayutthaya. King Songdhama was the 21st king of Ayutthaya and ascended the throne in 2153 B.E. He undertook ordination for a time before he ascended the throne. He was learnt in the Tripitaka. As a king, he used to leave the palace every day in order to teach Pali to a large number of monks and novice monks. He also sent Buddhist monks to study Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

King Narai ruled Ayutthaya from 2199 to 2231 B.E. He made a food-offering to the monks daily. This was the period of western colonialism and many countries in Asia came under colonial rule. Thailand had maintained its independence politically and religiously as a result of the capability of its kings. On one occasion, King Louis XIV of France sent a message to King Narai to invite the king of Ayutthaya to join his land with that of France and convert to Catholicism...

King Narai thanked the king of France deeply for his affection but expressed surprise that the king of France should interfere with God and His power, for is it not God’s intention that the world should have different religions? Is it not the reason why He allows this world to have so many different religions? It has to be God’s wish that I am now a Buddhist. And I am waiting for God to make me believe in Catholicism. Once God has done that, I will definitely become a Catholic. In the meantime, let my fate and that of Ayutthaya be in the hand of God.⁴²

King Narai subsequently issued a royal decree allowing Thai people to subscribe to any religion they wished. He also gave a parcel of land on which a Catholic church could be built so that the French envoy would not feel too disappointed. A small percentage of Thai people did convert to Catholicism. Today, Christians make up 2% of the Thai population. King Narai’s scheme was to give up a small piece in order to preserve the whole. However, were King Narai to convert to Catholicism then, surely most of the Thai people then and now would have become Christians and Buddhists would have become a minority today.

⁴² Stian Potinanta, *The History of Buddhism, Oral Tradition*, vol 2, 2510 B.E., p. 180

The Thonburi Period: Burma attacked Ayutthaya in 2310 B.E., and Ayutthaya's independence was lost. At the end of the same year, King Taksin restored Thailand's independence and established Thonburi as the new capital city. He provided the monks and novice monks who studied the Tripitaka with the four requisites. He encouraged Buddhist monks to practice righteousness according to the Dhamma-Vinaya. The king said that if the venerable monks observe the Precepts immaculately, were they to require flesh and blood from the laity, the laity would have gladly given up their flesh and blood as an offering to the monks. The king made this comment because at the time some monks did not practice according to the Dhamma-Vinaya. Moreover, they set themselves up as army generals. These non-practicing monks were eventually forced to disrobe. King Taksin's death ended the Thonburi Period.

The Rattanakosin Period: King Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke became the first king of the Rattanakosin Period on April 6, 2325 B.E. And he moved the capital city to Ratanakosin or Bangkok. Buddhism flourished during this period because every Rattanakosin king was a supporter of Buddhism.

King Rama I (2325 – 2352 B.E.): King Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke was a Buddhist. He made a food-offering to the monks twice a day. In the evening, he went to the temple to listen to Dhamma lectures. He sponsored the Sangiti near the end of 2331 B.E. It was held at the Upasatha Hall of Wat Si Sanphet (currently Wat Mahathat). The Sangiti was participated by 218 monks and 32 members of the Royal Institute.

The king visited the Sangiti venue twice a day, in the morning and in the evening in order to provide food and drinks to the participants. It took five months for the Sangiti to be completed. After the Sangiti was over, the king had the new edition of the Tripitaka written down and copies were made. This edition was called the Tongyai edition. The king had also passed ten different laws concerning the monastic community. The first law was passed in 2325 B.E., and the tenth law was passed in 2344 B.E. He built Wat Phra Si Rattana Satsadaram or Wat Phra Kaew in 2325 B.E. to house the Emerald Buddha.

King Rama II (2352 – 2367 B.E.): During the reign of King Buddha Loetla Nabhalai, the format of Pali studies was changed into the current nine levels format. Oral exams were used to evaluate the student's knowledge of Pali. The student had to translate Pali passages orally in front of the exam committee consisting of three to four monks while twenty to thirty monks were present as witnesses. If the student was an expert in Pali translation, he could pass all of the exams required for all nine grades of Pali studies within one day.

In 2363 B.E., there was an outbreak of cholera and a large number of people perished as a result. The king performed many wholesome deeds in order to help alleviate the situation. He had the verses of protection contained in the Paritara Incantation translated into Thai, and members of the royal household and government officials had to recite the Paritara Incantation in his presence every night. The chanting of Paritara has been practiced since the Lord Buddha's time. It started when there was an outbreak of cholera in the city of Paisali. The Lord Buddha told Venerable Ananda to learn the Ratana Sutta starting with "yankingi..." and recited the Paritara Incantation to rid Paisali of all harms.⁴³

King Rama III (2367 – 2394 B.E.): King Jessadabodindra was a devout Buddhist. It was said that wherever he was, whatever happened, his first concern was the support of Buddhism. He made a food-offering to the venerable monks daily and he regularly invited them to give him Dhamma lectures at the palace. He was not fond of "court plays" which used female actors but he was fond of listening to Dhamma lectures. This monarch was responsible for five editions of the Tripitaka, surpassing any monarch in the past. These included Rot Nam Eke, Rot Nam Toe, Tong Noi, Chup Yor, and Aksorn Raman. As a result of his earnest support of Buddhism, a large number of men undertook ordination. According to one European, there were 10,000 monks and novice monks in Bangkok and 100,000 monks and novice monks in the entire kingdom during his reign.⁴⁴

The Birth of the Dhammayut Order: During the reign of King Rama III, Venerable Vajiranana Thera⁴⁵ founded the Dhammayut Order. He was so impressed with the deportment of a Mon monk called Chai Buddhavanso that he re-ordained under the Mon Sangha in 2372 B.E. and founded the Dhammayut Order in 2376 B.E. He moved to Wat Bowonniwet and made it the center of the Dhammayut Order. He called the original Thai Sangha "Mahanikaya".

Before King Rama III passed away, he said to his retinue of attendants, "We will not be going to war with Vietnam or Burma any longer. The one threat now is the westerners. You must not be defeated by them. Whatever work they do that you think is good, learn it but do not become too impressed by it. These days I think only of abandoning all concerns. But the only concern I have left is the incompleteness of several large temples and the repairs of other temples. There will be no one to take care of them... I ask that the next king give 80,000 baht (the treasury had 320,000 baht at the time) to complete the construction of the temples and pay for the repair of other temples."⁴⁶

⁴³ *Khuddaka-nikāya Dhammapadagāthā*. vol. 43, no. 149

⁴⁴ Walter F. Wella, *The Reign of King Jessadabodindra*, trans. Nit Tongsopit, 2514 B.E., p. 63

⁴⁵ He later became King Rama IV.

⁴⁶ Chaophyatipakorawong, *The Rattanakosin Chronicles, King Rama III*, 2505 B.E., p. 187-188

King Rama IV (2394 – 2411 B.E.): As a prince, King Mongkut had spent 27 years in the monkhood. He disrobed and ascended the throne at the age of 57 in 2394 B.E. He built many new temples such as Wat Pathumvanaram, Wat Somanas Viharn, Wat Makutkasattriyaram, Wat Rajpradit Sathitmahasiram Rajaworavihara, Wat Rajabopit, etc. He also renovated many temples. He initiated the first Magha Puja Ceremony at Wat Phra Si Rattana Satsadaram in 2394 B.E. This practice has since become a Thai tradition.

King Rama V (2411 – 2453 B.E.): King Chulalongkorn was a visionary king. Under his rule, Thailand prospered politically and religiously. He started modern education in Thailand. School was taught by venerable monks in the temples. In 2472 B.E., he founded the first school at Wat Mahanparam.

In 2432 B.E., he moved the Pali school from Wat Phra Si Rattana Satsadaram to a Pali college called Mahathatvidyalaya located inside Wat Mahathat. In 2439 B.E., the name of the college was changed to Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. It was an important institute providing higher education for Buddhist monks and novices with emphasis on Buddhist studies. He wanted to provide western style education to the monks and novices.

He had the Tripitaka printed using the Thai alphabets. This edition consists of 39 volumes and altogether 1,000 sets were printed in 2435 B.E. In 2436 B.E., the Supreme Patriarch, Somdet Krom Phraya Vajiranavarorasa founded Mahamakut Rajavidyalaya. It was a higher education institute for Buddhist monks and novices in the Dhammayut Order with emphasis on Buddhist studies.

King Chulalongkorn passed a law which dealt with monastic community governance in 2445 B.E. corresponding to the 121st Anniversary of Rattanakosin. He also built several temples such as Wat Rajabopit, Wat Thepsirin, Wat Benchamabopit, Wat Atsadang Nimit, Wat Chutathit, and Wat Niwet Thammapravat. He renovated Wat Mahathat and other temples. He produced many literary works about Buddhism.

King Rama the Sixth (2453 – 2468 B.E.): King Vajiravudh was a Buddhist scholar and had written many books about Buddhism such as the series of lectures given to the Wild Tiger Corps, what is the Lord Buddha's enlightened knowledge, etc. He taught the Dhamma to government officials. In 2455 B.E., the Supreme Patriarch, Somdet Krom Phraya Vajiranavarorasa changed the oral exam format in Pali studies to the written exam format.

In 2456 B.E., King Vajiravudh established the use of Buddhist Era in the place of the year of Ratanakosin. In the years 2462 and 2463 B.E., he had many Buddhist texts printed. These included the Tripitaka Commentary, the Jataka Commentary, Visudhimagga, Milindapanha, etc. He established the Nakdham curriculum (formerly "The Novice's Dhamma Knowledge") in 2469 B.E. The first Novice's Dhamma Knowledge exam was held in October 2454 B.E.

King Rama the Seventh (2468 – 2477 B.E.): King Prajadhipok sponsored Thailand's Third Sangiti which took place between 2468 and 2473 B.E., and dedicated the merit earned to King Vajiravudh. He had the Siamrath version Tripitaka printed. This version consists of 45 volumes and altogether 1,500 sets were printed; and 450 sets were given to different Buddhist countries. In 2471 B.E., the Ministry of Education established for the first time a Dhamma curriculum to provide formal Dhamma education for householders.

King Rama the Eighth (2477 – 2489 B.E.): During the reign of King Ananda Mahidol, the Tripitaka was translated into Thai. There were two versions as follows.

1. Translation by meaning: This Thai language Tripitaka consists of 80 volumes. The work was completed in 2500 B.E. in time to celebrate 25 centuries of Buddhism.
2. Translation by Dhamma lecture style: This version was printed on palm leaves and consists of 1,250 sermons. It is called "The Official Version Tripitaka". The work was completed in 2492 B.E.

In 2484 B.E., the government passed the law concerning monastic community governance to make it more in line with the new form of government. In 2488 B.E., Mahamakut Rajavidyalaya, which was founded in 2436 B.E., became a Sangha university and its name was changed to Mahamakut Buddhist University.

King Rama the Ninth (2489 B.E. – the present): During the reign of King Bhumibol Adulyadej and in 2514 B.E., primary and secondary education was established. In 2501 B.E., the first Buddhist Sunday school was opened for Buddhist children and youth at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. Later, the Buddhist Sunday school was opened nationwide. The Ministry of Education decreed that Buddhist education was compulsory for every child from the seventh to the twelfth grades.

In 2508 B.E., the World Fellowship of Buddhists was founded. Today, there is an increase in the use of literary works to help propagate Buddhism. One good example is the book titled "It's a pity a dead person cannot read it." This book is reprinted more than thirty times and more than 100,000 copies have been sold.

Royal court services and rituals have been changed to government services and rituals to be organized by each of the ministries. There are religious events to promote Buddhism on Visakha Puja Day, Magha Puja Day, Asalha Puja Day at Putthamonthon. These religious events have been attended by the king's representatives. Putthamonthon was built to commemorate Buddhism's 25th Century Anniversary.

2. Cambodia

Cambodia's official name is the Kingdom of Cambodia. Its form of government is constitutional monarchy. Its capital and largest city is Phnom Penh. Cambodia had been under French rule for almost a hundred years. It received its independence in 2496 B.E. It has a population of 14,071,000 (as of 2548 B.E.), 93% are Theravada Buddhists and the rest believe in different spirits and other things.

Buddhism has been in Cambodia for over 2,000 years. Historical evidences indicate that Buddhism entered this country since the 3rd century B.E. These include the stone tablets found in the town of Vokan, the oldest stone tablets found in Southeast Asia.⁴⁷ In the past, Cambodia was part of Suvarnabhumi and Venerables Sona Thera and Uttara Thera went to teach Buddhism there during the reign of Asoka the Great. There are four important periods in the Cambodian history: The Funan period, the Jainla period, the Khmer Empire period, and the current period.

The Funan Period (600 – 1100 B.E.): The word Funan appeared in different historical letters found in China. The word is a deviation from the Khmer word “Panom” or “Vanom” which in Sanskrit means mountain. In the past, people of the Funan period used to believe in the four elements of earth, water, wind, and fire as well as ghosts and tree deities. They converted to Buddhism once Buddhism entered the country. In 543 B.E., an Indian Brahmin called Kaundinya was crowned the new king of the kingdom of Funan. King Kaundinya was an adherent of Saivism (Vishnu worship) and members of the royal court converted to Saivism as well. As far as the Funan people were concerned, some were Buddhists and others were adherents of Brahmanism.

King Srimara succeeded King Kaundinya. This king was a Buddhist and he declared Buddhism the state religion. Stone tablet inscriptions dated back to the 7th or 8th century B.E. said that King Srimara told the person succeeding him to believe in and support Buddhism.⁴⁸ One Chinese chronicle showed that the new king did obey King Srimara's command. The chronicle also mentioned that an Indian monk, Venerable Nagasena traveled to the Funan Kingdom before traveling on to China in 1027 B.E. Venerable Nagasena reported to the Chinese king that the Funan Kingdom is a very prosperous land. Some Funan people are adherents of Brahmanism and others are Buddhists. However, Buddhism is flourishing and there are a large number of Buddhist monks who practice righteousness according to the Dhamma-Vinaya.⁴⁹

In 1046 B.E., the king of the Funan Kingdom sent to China a diplomatic envoy that included two Buddhist monks, Venerable Sanghapala and Venerable Mantolo. Venerable Sanghapala was a linguist as well as a scholar of the Tripitaka. He was a dignified and graceful monk whose reputation spread all the way to China. Emperor Boo Ti of the Liang Dynasty invited the venerable monk to China to teach the Dhamma and translate the Tripitaka into Chinese. The translation work took 16 years. It was how the names of these two venerable monks came to be mentioned in the Chinese Tripitaka.

⁴⁷ Venerable Ravee Dhammathito, **The Impact of the Civil War on Buddhism in Cambodia During the Years 2513-2534 B.E.**, 2549 B.E., p. 1-2

⁴⁸ Ibid, pages 19-20

⁴⁹ Ibid.

In 1057 B.E., King Rudravarman ascended the throne. He was a devout Buddhist and declared himself an Upasaka. He had as an object of worship one of the Lord Buddha's hair. This king's name is the last to appear in the Funan period. In 1170 B.E., the Jainla Kingdom invaded the Funan Kingdom and incorporated Funan as part of its territory.

The Jainla Period (B.E. 1100 – 1344): The word “Jainla” is a Chinese word used to call the northern part of the Funan Kingdom. The word is a deviation from the Khmer word “Juean Ler” which means upper floor, plateau or north. King Varman became the first king of the Jainla Kingdom in 1093 B.E. Earlier kings were adherents of Saivism. During the reign of King Ishanavarman I (1159 – 1169 B.E.), it was written in the Chinese chronicle of the Sui Dynasty that during the reign of Ishanavarman I there were many Bhikkus and Bhikkunis...⁵⁰

During the reign of King Jayavarman I (1200 – 1224 B.E.), the Chinese monk I Ching, who passed the Jainla Kingdom on his way to India, wrote that Buddhism flourishes during this period and there are Buddhist temples everywhere. People undertake ordination and so do members of the royal household. In the 14th century B.E., Mahayana Buddhism entered Southeast Asia and Cambodia also accepted it but it did not exert as much influence on the people as Theravada Buddhism. It was soon after the reign of King Jayavarman I that the Jainla Kingdom came to an end.

The Khmer Empire Period (1345 – 1975 B.E.): This period was the pinnacle of Khmer civilization. There were many spectacular works of art and architecture during this great period as exemplified by Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom. This period began with King Jayavarman II (1345 – 1420 B.E.) and ended with the reign of King Ponhea Yat (1975 B.E.) who moved the capital city from Angkor to Phnom Penh.

King Jayavarman II ascended the throne in 1345 B.E., and moved the capital city from Jainla to Mount Mahendraparvata or currently Mount Kulen. He was an adherent of Brahmanism but the people were Buddhists still. Subsequent Khmer kings subscribed to either Brahmanism or Buddhism but both religions coexisted peacefully.

King Suryavarman I ruled Khmer between 1545 and 1593 B.E. He was the first king to make Mahayana Buddhism the state religion. King Suryavarman II ruled Khmer between 1656 and 1693 B.E. He was an adherent of Brahmanism. He built Angkor Wat as homage to Vishnu but it was later converted into a Buddhist temple during the reign of King Jayavarman VII.

Angkor Wat is located in Siem Reap. It is considered to be one of the world's seven wonders. It covers an area of 200,000 square meters. Each of the outer walls is 1.5 kilometers long. The structure required 600,000 cubic meters of stones. More than 40,000 elephants and 100,000 people were employed to transport and carry the stones to the construction site. It has 1,800 pillars and each pillar weighs more than ten tons. It took a hundred years for the construction to be completed. And more than 5,000 craftsmen spent 40 years to complete the stone carving work.

⁵⁰ Venerable Ravee Dhammathito, *The Impact of the Civil War on Buddhism in Cambodia During the Years 2513-2534 B.E.*, 2549 B.E., p. 20

King Jayavarman VII ascended the throne in 1724 B.E. He was the most famous king in the history of Cambodia. He built Angkor Thom as his capital city and conducted himself like Asoka the Great and a Bodhisattva. He had 798 Buddha Images enshrined all over his kingdom.

He established the Tabrahm Castle or Wat Buriraj as the Sangha University. Eighteen senior monks served as professors and 2,740 monks served as associate professors. Work at the university was also helped by 2,232 Upasakas and 615 Upasikas. It was a place where 12,640 people came to observe the Precepts or study the Dhamma for short or long periods. Many different groups of people totaling 66,625 people also came to the university. And altogether 79,265 people that included the Burmese and Champa people came to stay and study here. Inside the temple, there were monastic residences, 566 of which were built with stones, and 288 were built with bricks. And 439 monks went to receive food daily at the royal palace.⁵¹

In addition, King Jayavarman VII sent his son, Venerable Tamalinda to study Buddhism in Sri Lanka. He was ordained at Wat Mahavihara in Sri Lanka at the time when Theravada Buddhism was flourishing and Sri Lanka was the center of Buddhist education. After the prince returned to Cambodia, he caused Theravada Buddhism to flourish. He also made Buddhism the state religion. It remains so until today. At the same time, Mahayana Buddhism and Brahmanism were going through a decline.

In the 19th century B.E., the kingdom of Cambodia became very weak while the Ayutthaya Kingdom became very strong. As a result, in 1894 B.E., Ayutthaya invaded Angkor Thom and took control of Cambodia in 1895 B.E. Ayutthaya attacked and plundered Cambodia once again in 1974 B.E. The Cambodian king, Ponhea Yat, left Angkor Thom in 1975 B.E., and went to stay in Phnom Penh. The Khmer Empire period which had lasted for more than 600 years (from 1345 to 1975 B.E.) finally reached its end in 1975 B.E.

The Current Period (from 1975 B.E., to the present): At the end of the Khmer Empire period, Cambodia established a new capital near the lake and called it Lovek City. Buddhism still flourished during this period and the people were devoted to the monks. Foreign missionaries had come in to spread their religion but their effort bore little fruit. In 2109 B.E., a Portuguese friar named Gaspar da Cruz traveled to Lovek City to convert the natives into Catholicism but his mission failed.

Gaspar da Cruz said that the monks consist of a third of able men in Cambodia or by his estimate numbering around 100,000. He said that these Buddhist monks are highly venerated by the people as though they were living gods. Junior monks treat the more senior monks with respect as if they were gods. No one ever disagrees with the monks. Sometimes while I am preaching to the people and a monk happens to walk by, someone will say, "That is all well and good but ours is better." With that, everyone stands up and walks away, leaving me alone there.⁵²

⁵¹ Venerable Ravee Dhammathito, **The Impact of the Civil War on Buddhism in Cambodia During the Years 2513-2534 B.E.**, 2549 B.E., p. 33-34

⁵² Venerable Ravee Dhammathito, **The Impact of the Civil War on Buddhism in Cambodia during the years 2513-2534 B.E.**, 2549 B.E., p. 39-40

In 2410 B.E., Cambodia came under French rule. Cambodia received its independence in 2496 B.E. during the reign of King Norodom Sihanouk. In 2498 B.E., he ceded the throne to his father, King Suramarit so that he could enter politics and formed the Sangkum Party. After he won the election, he assumed the post of Prime Minister.

King Norodom Sihanouk applied Dhamma Principles to his politics and called his theory Buddhist Socialism. He did this in order to stave off Communism which was beginning to spread into Cambodia. Under pressure from the U.S. together with internal conflicts, General Lon Nol staged a revolt in 2513 B.E., which led to the Cambodian Civil War. About one million Cambodians had lost their lives by the time the civil war ended in 2534 B.E.

While Cambodia was under General Lon Nol's rule, support for Buddhism continued. The government declared Buddhism the state religion but the monks were asked to resist the Communists represented by the Khmer Rouge. There was a propaganda campaign that if Communism gained power, Buddhism and Buddhist monks in Cambodia would be no more.

General Lon Nol was in power for only five years when another revolt was staged in 2518 B.E., this time by the Khmer Rouge under the leadership of General Pol Pot. Under the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia was ruled by Communism and eight new government policies were issued. Under these policies, all Buddhist monks had to disrobe and go to work in the rice paddies; leaders of the former government had to be executed, etc.

Buddhism had met with terrible harm and its lowest point arrived when the Supreme Patriarch of Cambodia was executed. Under the Khmer Rouge rule, Cambodians, Cambodian monks and novice monks numbering two millions altogether had been killed. Surviving monks were told to either work or go without food. Some were forced to disrobe. Temples were closed down or destroyed. Some were turned into chicken farms or pig farms. Communism regards religion as an addiction and the monks as doing nothing and being nothing but society's parasite. People were forbidden to make a food-offering. One person who went through the situation said, "During this period, there are no temples, no Buddhist monks, no chanting, and no worshipping the Triple Gem."

Once the civil war period ended, the United Nations offered to help Cambodia by for example giving the country three billion dollars in order to get ready an election in B.E. 2536. The country's name was changed to the Kingdom of Cambodia. Buddhism gradually recovered in spite of political unrest.

3. Burma

Burma's official name is the Union of Myanmar. Its capital city is Naypyidaw and its largest city is Rangoon. Its form of government is military. It has a population of 50,519,000 (as of 2548 B.E.), 90% are Buddhists, 4% are Christians, 3% are Moslems, 0.7% are Hindus, and 2.3% believe in ghosts and black magic.⁵³

Burma has a long and complex history. The country has a myriad of ethnic groups such as Bamar, Shan, Karen, Rakhine, Mon, etc. The Burmese migrated from the border region between China and Tibet to the Irrawaddy River delta around the 13th century B.E.

Human beings had lived in the region known as Burma today for about 11,000 years. The first ethnic group to occupy this land was the Negrito but it was the Mons who created their own unique civilization after entering the area around 2,400 years before the Buddhist Era. The Mons established the Suvarnabhumi Kingdom around the 2nd century B.E. Its capital was called "Saterm". Negrito, the original ethnic group relocated to the big island of Balu opposite the town of Mawlamyai. Members of this ethnic group are fierce-looking with frizzy hair, dark skin, and coarse mannerism. They are looked upon as Yakkhas and the word Balu means Yakkha.

According to the Shwedagon Pagoda stone tablet inscriptions, Buddhism entered Burma since the Lord Buddha's time. Two Mon merchants named Tapussa and Bhallika received a few strands of hair from the Lord Buddha and they enshrined them inside the Shwedagon Pagoda.⁵⁴ It was written in the Commentary that Tapussa and Bhallika traveled from the countryside of Ukkala to India along with 500 wagons loaded with goods. During their travel, they made an offering of Sattu rice powder and Sattu rice lumps to the Lord Buddha. And before they left, the Lord Buddha gave them eight strands of His hair. When the two men returned to their city, they enshrined the hair strands at the city gate of Asitanjana City⁵⁵. But it is not known if Ukkala and Asitanjana City were in Burma.

According to the Mon chronicles written in 293 B.E., Venerable Sona Thera and Venerable Uttara Thera went to teach Buddhism in Saterm of the Suvarnabhumi Kingdom. They chanted the Paritara Incantation to chase away aquatic Yakkhas and prevent them from hurting the Mon people. It was postulated that the Yakkhas in the Mon chronicles might be the Negrito people.⁵⁶ It was written in the Commentary that when Venerable Sona Thera and Venerable Uttara Thera arrived at Suvarnabhumi, a female Yakkha and her attendants came out of the ocean. When the people saw them, they were frightened and they cried out in fear. The venerable monks caused their bodies to multiply in number such that they overwhelmed the Yakkha and her attendants and chased them away.⁵⁷

⁵³ Wikipedia (2549 B.E.) Burma

⁵⁴ Virutch Niyomtum (2549 B.E.), Mon: The Owner of Ancient Civilization in Burma

⁵⁵ *Āṅguttaranikāya Ekanipāta-Dukkanipāta*, vol. 33, no. 59

⁵⁶ Virutch Niyomtum (2549 B.E.), Mon: The Owner of Ancient Civilization in Burma

⁵⁷ *Aṭṭhakathā-vinayaṭṭhaka Mahavibhaṅg Part I*, vol. 1, no. 118

The Pyu people have lived in Burma since the 4th century B.E. and had founded many city-states such as Sri Ksetra. At the time, Burma was part of the trade route between China and India. Ancient Chinese documents showed that there were altogether eighteen city-states under the Pyu rule. The Pyu people were adherents of Theravada Buddhism. Children were educated in the temple until the age of twenty.

Theravada Buddhism flourished in Burma around the 6th century B.E. Later, Mahayana monks, who were Venerable Vasubandhu's disciples, came to teach Tantric Buddhism in Burma. Both schools flourished in Burma for many centuries but Buddhism reached its height in the 11th century B.E.

The Burmese people gradually migrated from the north and attacked the Mon people such that the Mon people had to retreat and built a new capital city in Hansavadi. In 1368 B.E., the Burmese people established a new kingdom with Pagan as its political center. In 1392 B.E., during the period where the Pyu kingdom was going through a decline, the Burmese king Anawrahta (1587 to 1620 B.E.) united the Pagan kingdom which had heretofore been divided.

In 1600 B.E., King Anawrahta attacked the Mon city of Saterm. He took from the Mon people the Tripitaka as well as their Buddhist culture and caused Theravada Buddhism to spread widely. With the help of the Mon monk, Chinarahant, the king had built many important Pagodas. He also had the Shwedagon Pagoda enlarged because it had been a long held tradition that each king should maintain the Pagoda. Queen Chin Saw Pu donated her weight in gold or 40 kilograms so that the gold could be fashioned into gold sheets used for covering the Pagoda. King Dhammazedī also donated four times his weight in gold toward the Pagoda. King Mindon worshipped the Lord Buddha by adding a white crown umbrella embedded with diamonds to the Pagoda. Since then it had been the tradition that every king donated his weight in gold to fashion the gold sheets used for covering the Pagoda.⁵⁸

Shwedagon is a Burmese word. Shwe means gold and Dagon means the city of Dagon, Rangoon's old name. Therefore, Shwedagon Pagoda means the gold Pagoda of Dagon City. It is the largest gold Pagoda in the world. It is located on Singuttara Hill in Rangoon City.

Legend has it that the Pagoda was built by the two merchants, Tapussa and Bhallika but archaeologists believed it to be built between the 6th and 10th century C.E. Initially, the Pagoda stood just 27 feet but the Burmese people had contributed money, silver, and gold to add to the original Pagoda throughout the centuries until it now stands at 326 feet high and 1,355 feet wide. All the gold sheets used to cover the Pagoda weigh a total of 1,100 kilograms.⁵⁹ Burmese goldsmiths fashioned gold sheets out of solid gold and covered the Pagoda with them. The top of the Pagoda contains 5,448 diamonds and at the very top there was a 72-carat diamond surrounded by 2,317 rubies.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Kom Chud Lerk (2549 B.E.) *Touring the Land of Dhamma: The Beauty of the Buddhist Way in Shwedagon*

⁵⁹ Part of the gold came from that removed from the Buddha Images in Ayutthaya during the Burma-Thailand war in B.E. 2310.

⁶⁰ Wikipedia (2549 B.E.) Shwedagon Pagoda

Besides the Shwedagon Pagoda, many Pagodas had been built in Pagan because the people of Pagan believe that Pagoda building is the source of the greatest amount of merit. In the vast valley of the Irrawaddy River, nearly 4,000 Pagodas can be seen along its banks. For this reason, Pagan is called the sea of Pagodas. It has been named a World Heritage site by UNESCO. Today, only 2,000 or so of these Pagodas remain but most of them were in a neglected state. It is due to the Burmese deep faith and fear of sin that none of these Pagodas has ever been damaged. Each Pagoda entrance way still contains beautiful Buddha Images. Not a single one of the diamond, ruby or emerald used to decorate the tiny tuft of hair between the Image's eyebrows has ever been stolen.

After the reign of King Anawrahta, Buddhism continued to be supported by Burmese kings. King Sithu II sent Dhamma envoys to revive Buddhism in Sri Lanka in 1733 B.E. The envoys were led by Venerable Utrajiva. At the time a Mon novice monk named Chabat also accompanied the Dhamma envoys. He ordained as a monk under the Lankavongse Order, and later returned to Burma along with four other monks and founded the Singhala Order in Burma. Monks in the Singhala Order did not believe the monks in the Maramang Order to have been properly ordained. Therefore, there was a conflict between these two orders which had lasted for three centuries and eventually the Singhala Order won their case.

The Pagan Kingdom continued to flourish until the reign of King Narathihapate. From 1799 to 1830 B.E., the Mongol army had attacked Pagan and greatly weakened the Pagan Kingdom. Makado⁶¹ ordered the Mon Kingdom, which had been under Pagan rule since 1600 B.E. to declare its independence. He also established the Shan Dynasty which used the city of Mottama as its political center.

Mottama was Mon's capital city until 1912 B.E. when the capital city was moved to Hansavadi. During the reign of King Dhammazedi (2015 – 2035 B.E.), the Mon Kingdom reached its height. In an effort to unite the original six Buddhist orders, the king asked the leaders of all six orders to re-ordain in Sri Lanka so that all of them could be on equal footing. At the time, twenty-two senior monks and twenty-two monks went to Sri Lanka to be re-ordained.

Upon their return to Hansavadi, King Dhammazedi told every Buddhist monk in the kingdom to disrobe and re-ordain under the monks who had been re-ordained in Sri Lanka. The new group of monks was called Kalayani. At the time, 15,666 monks were re-ordained. However, upon the passing of this king, divisiveness in the monastic community returned.

During the 21st century B.E. (2001 – 2100 B.E.), the Portuguese started to come into Burma. One particular Portuguese helped the king of Rakhine quell the uprising and he was later appointed governor of Si Riam. While in power, this Portuguese took the opportunity to spread Catholicism while attacking Buddhism by seizing temple properties, forbidding the people to make a food-offering to the monks, etc. The monks had to flee to the city of Angva to make their plea. Finally, the Burmese people and the Mon people joined forces to rid Burma of the Portuguese and many Portuguese men were put to death on the cross.

⁶¹ Makado or Prince Fa Rua was Pho Khun Ram Kham Haeng's son-in-law.

In 2094 B.E., King Tabinshwehti of Burma attacked and seized control of Hansavadi. Burma reached its height during the reign of King Bayinnaug. This king had extended the kingdom far and wide until he was given the name, the Great Victor. The countries under his rule included Angva, Phrae, Chiangmai, Ayutthaya, Rakhine, Lan Xan, and the Tai Yai territories. He had ruled his vast kingdom for thirty years until he passed away in 2124 B.E.

King Bayinnaug's son ascended the throne but he did not possess the same kind of power as his father. All the countries that used to be under Burmese rule, Thailand included, declared independence from Burma. The Mon people asked the Karen monk called Venerable Sala, who was an expert in black magic, to disrobe and think up a plan to chase the Burmese out. The plan was successful and Sala crowned himself king in the city of Hansavadi in 2283 B.E. He called himself King Smim Htaw Buddhaketi. He successfully dominated Tong-U and Phrae but he was in power for only seven years. In 2300 B.E., Burma took control of the Mon Kingdom once again and that spelled the end of the Mon Kingdom.

In the 24th century B.E., Burma was under the British colonial rule and the British Empire had taken away much of Burma's natural resources. In 2396 B.E., King Mindon staged a revolution and seized power from King Pagan. During the reign of King Mindon, five Sangitis had been held to settle questions about the Theravada Tripitaka. The events were held in the city of Mandalay. In 2414 B.E., the Tripitaka was inscribed on 729 marble tablets. The work was supported by the monks from four different countries, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos.

The son of King Mindon ascended the throne as King Thibaw in 2421 B.E. He was deported to India by the British Empire. During this period, Buddhism was attacked by Christianity. Buddhist monks incited the people against the British Empire and demonstrations were staged. Some of the monks were subsequently arrested and put in prison.

Burma received its independence on January 4, 2492 B.E. Buddhism was revived and the sixth Sangiti was held in Rangoon during May 17, 2497 B.E. and May 24, 2499 B.E. It was also the opportunity to celebrate Buddhism's 25th Century Anniversary. Copies of the Tripitaka and the Commentary were printed and translated into the Burmese language. Buddhists from countries such as Burma, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia were invited to attend the celebration.

4. Laos

Laos's official name is the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Its current form of government is Communism. Its capital and largest city is Vientiane. Its population is 5,924,000 (as of 2548 B.E.), 60% are Theravada Buddhists and 40% practice Animism and other religions. Human beings have lived in Laos for a very long time but its more recent history appeared around the 19th century B.E. as the Lan Xan Kingdom founded by Phraya Fa Ngum in 1896 B.E.

Queen Kaew Yod Fa, Phraya Fa Ngum's wife sent diplomatic envoys led by Venerable Mahapasaman to bring Theravada monks from Cambodia to teach Buddhism in Lan Xan.

Venerable Mahapasaman Thera and the monks left Cambodia in 1902 B.E. and brought with them one Buddha Image called Phra Bang as well as the Tripitaka to the king of Laos. As soon as the monks arrived in Vientiane, the governor of Vientiane invited them to stay in Vientiane for three days and three nights to celebrate the arrival of Phra Bang before traveling on to Viengkam. In Viengkam, the people also came to worship Phra Bang for three days and three nights. When the monks were ready to continue with their travel, a miraculous event occurred. The Buddha Image could not be moved. The monks figured it could be that celestial beings in the area wished for Phra Bang to remain in Viengkam and so the monks left for Chiangtong without the Buddha Image. They stayed on to help King Fa Ngum and his queen spread Buddhism in Lan Xan Kingdom.

King Visunarath (2044 – 2063 B.E.) was a Buddhist and he built Wat Barom Maha Rajavang Viengtong and Wat Visularaj. He had the Buddha Image "Phra Bang" brought from Viengkam and had it enshrined in this temple. King Photisarath (2063 – 2090 B.E.) built Wat Suvan Tevaloka and commanded the people to stop practicing animism. He had many animist shrines removed and told the people to believe in Buddhism.

After King Photisarath's passing, his two sons vied for the throne and caused the Lan Xan Kingdom to split into two, the north kingdom and the south kingdom. Later, King Chaiyachettha of the Lanna Kingdom attacked Lan Xan and seized control of both the north and the south kingdoms. He crowned himself the king of Lan Xan and chose the city of Srisatnaknahut as his capital.

Buddhism reached its height during the reign of King Chaiyachettha. He built many temples and there were around 120 temples in the city. He built Wat Phra Kaew for the "the Emerald Buddha", which had been brought from Chiangmai. During this period, Thailand and Laos shared a close relationship because they had joined forces in fighting Burma. And Phratat Sisongrak Cetiya was built in Dansai Amphoe, Loei Province to commemorate the bond of brotherhood between Thailand and Laos.

King Chaiyachettha moved his capital from Chiangkam to Vientiane. He had two of the three Buddha Images, “the Emerald Buddha” and “Phra Buddhasihing”, enshrined in Vientiane and the third Buddha Image “Phra Bang” in Chiangtong. Chiangtong was later called Luang Phra Bang. In 2109 B.E., he built Phratat Luang Cetiya, Lao’s architectural masterpiece. He also built other Cetiya and a large number of Buddha Images. These included Phrajao Ongter in Vientiane and Phra Serm, Phra Suk, Phra Sai, Phra Inplang, Phra Ongsan in Tabor Amphoe of Nongkai Province. He also built Wat Phratat, Phratat Bangpuan Cetiya, Wat Si Muang where the Buddha Image “Phra Chaiyachettha” is enshrined.

In 2117 – 2118 B.E. after King Chaiyachettha passed away, Laos was attacked by King Bayinnaug of Hansavadi. King Bayinnaug subsequently took King Chaiyachettha’s son, Prince Nokeo Koumanh as hostage. In 2134 B.E., the abbots of the different temples in Laos held a meeting and agreed to send diplomatic envoys to ask that Prince Nokeo Koumanh who had been held hostage in Burma be allowed to return to rule Laos. At the time, King Bayinnaug had already passed away and Burma had lost much of its former power. Prince Nokeo Koumanh became king in 2135 B.E. He ruled Laos as King Suryavongsa and declared Laos as an independent state.

In 2235 B.E., after King Suryavongsa passed away, Laos was once again split into two kingdoms, Luang Phra Bang and Vientiane. Eventually King Taksin of Thailand attacked Vientiane and ruled over it in 2321 B.E. King Taksin had the Buddha Image, the Emerald Buddha, brought to Thailand. In 2436 B.E., Laos came under French rule and was under French rule for 45 years. It received its independence on July 19, 2492 B.E.

Buddhism forms the foundation of the cultures, traditions, thoughts, and beliefs of the Laotians. The merit-making activities carried out during Tatluang Festival is very much a Laotian tradition. Laos boasts a large number of Buddhist arts, Buddhist sculptures, and Buddhist architecture. Buddhism has also helped the people of Laos in many ways. The people looked up to the monks and sought their counsel on various matters. The monks provided the four necessities to the needy. The temple was the people’s social center. Etc. Today, Laos is a peaceful country and its government supports Buddhism. There are education centers for Buddhist monks such as the Sangha College in Vientiane, etc.

5. Vietnam

Vietnam means the southern kingdom. Its official name is the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Hanoi is its capital city and its largest city is Ho Chi Min City. Vietnam has a population of 84,238,000 (as of 2548 B.E.), 50% are Mahayana Buddhists and the other 50% are adherents of Confucianism and Christianity.

In the past, Vietnam was divided into three regions: Tong King, the valley of the Dang River; Annam, the long narrow area along the coastline between Tong King and Cochin China; and Cochin China, the southern territory. It is postulated that the Annam Kingdom lasted for almost three thousand years before it came under Chinese rule in 433 B.E., and remained under Chinese rule for more than a thousand years. It is for this reason that the Vietnamese culture is strongly influenced by the Chinese culture. During this period, Vietnam was called Annam.

Buddhism entered Annam around the 7th century B.E. while it was still under Chinese rule. It is postulated that Meou-Po went from China to spread Mahayana Buddhism in Vietnam. It is also postulated that three Indian monks, Venerable Mahajivaka, Venerable Kalyanaraji and Venerable Tang Seng Hoi came to spread Buddhism in Annam but they were not successful, since the Chinese emperor at the time was an adherent of Confucianism and he did not want any of his subjects to believe in Buddhism.

In 1482 B.E., Vietnam gained its independence from China and an earnest effort to revive Buddhism was made. One Indian monk called Vinitruji went to study Zen Buddhism in China and he later went to spread Zen Buddhism in Vietnam. In 1511 – 1522 B.E., the Vietnamese government set up an organization to govern the monks where Buddhist monks and Taoist monks received equal treatment. The Vietnamese king appointed the Buddhist monk, Ngor Chan Lu as the Supreme Patriarch as well as advisor to the king.

Buddhism reached its height during the Ly Dynasty because it was the only religion supported by the kings. During the reign of King Ly Thai Tong (1571 – 1588 B.E.), he had 95 Viharas built. King Ly Thanh Tong (1597 – 1615 B.E.) did a great deal for the country and supported Buddhism after the manner of Asoka the Great.

Vietnam came under Chinese rule once again during 1956 and 1974 B.E. During this period, Buddhism went through a decline because the kings of the Ming Dynasty supported Confucianism and Taoism. China had destroyed Buddhist temples and confiscated all of the temple properties including Buddhist scriptures. After Vietnam gained its independence from China, the condition of Buddhism did not improve, since the kings of the new dynasty did not support Buddhism.

In 2014 B.E., King Le Thanh Tong extended his influence over the Champa Kingdom and the Champa Kingdom became part of Vietnam. But in 2076 B.E., Vietnam was split into two clans, Trinh in the north and Nguyen in the south. Although the two clans waged battles against each other for 270 years, each clan continued to support Buddhism by building new temples and renovating old ones.

Around the 22nd century B.E., many western countries such as Portugal, Holland, France, Spain, and the British Empire entered Vietnam to trade and spread Christianity. They had spread Christianity in Vietnam for 200 years until the years 2370 -2401 B.E., when the Vietnamese people decided to persecute the Christians. A large number of missionaries and about 100,000 Vietnamese Christians were murdered. This heinous act created an intense conflict between Vietnam and the British Empire and finally in 2402 B.E., Vietnam came under British rule.

Having gained independence from the British Empire, Vietnam came under French rule once again in 2426 B.E. Under French rule, new temples could be built only with a special permission. Buddhist monks were limited in terms of their right to receive alms and a limit was posed on the number of Buddhist monks. Buddhists were prevented from assuming administrative positions in the government. However, the people that converted to Christianity and became French citizens could receive special privileges. During this period, it looked as if Buddhism would disappear altogether from Vietnam.

In the midst of suffering as a French colony, one person was born in Vietnam in the middle of 2469 B.E. He was later widely known in the west as Thich Nhat Hanh. He has devoted his life for the cause of peace and he was recommended by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 2510 B.E. Thich Nhat Hanh ordained during the Vietnam War (2503 – 2518 B.E.) when he was sixteen years old. He left the temple to help victims of the war and began to campaign for peace. In 2509 B.E., he was invited to the United States. While in the U.S., he told the public about the pain and suffering that the Vietnamese people had to endure as a result of the war. His activity caused the Vietnamese government to threaten his arrest. For this reason, Thich Nhat Hanh could not return to Vietnam and had to go to live in France. He built a place for meditation in the village of Plum in 2525 B.E., and has been living there ever since.

After Buddhism almost disappeared from Vietnam under French rule, it was revived in 2474 B.E. The Buddhist Education Society was founded and many of its branches were opened throughout Saigon, Ve, and Hanoi. This society emphasized education and social welfare. Vinaya or disciplinary rules for Buddhist monks was transformed and modern Buddhist education was put in place for the Buddhist monks. A Buddhist journal was printed and different Mahayana and Theravada scriptures were translated. During this period, Buddhism was successfully revived and a large number of educated people in Vietnam, who were disappointed with the consumerism of the west, came to work for the Buddhist Cause.

Today, the Vietnamese people practice a mixture of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. The Vietnamese Buddhist Union offers courses on Buddhist Studies through Van Hanh University. Currently four programs are being offered: Buddhist Studies and Eastern Studies, Literature and the Humanities, Social Science, and the Languages. Some of the courses offered under Buddhist Studies and Eastern Studies include Buddhist Philosophy, Buddhism in Vietnam, Eastern Philosophy, Indian Philosophy, Chinese Philosophy, and Western Philosophy.

6. Indonesia

Indonesia's official name is the Republic of Indonesia. It is the largest archipelago in the world. Its capital and largest city is Jakarta. It has a population of 222,781,000, 87% are Moslems, 9.5% are Christians, 1.8% are Hindus, and 1.3% are Buddhists. Indonesia has the largest Moslem population in the world which is 193,819,470.⁶² These are devout Moslems. On the last Id al-Fitr Day⁶³ which took place on October 24, 2549 B.E., millions of Indonesian Moslems attended religious activities at the different Mosques.

Today Indonesia is a Moslem country but in the past, Mahayana Buddhism used to flourish here. This fact is borne out by such monuments as Borobudur which is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is located on the Kedu Plain in the middle of Java, a site considered to be sacred. The monument consists of six square platforms topped by three circular platforms. It covers an area of 123 square meters and was once 42 meters high. Volcano eruption and lightning caused the monument to sink deeper into the ground and its current height is 31.5 meters. Lava rocks were used to build the monument and about 55,000 square meters of them were needed.

Dr. Krom said that Borobudur came from the words Para and Buddha. However, Dr. Statterheim said that Budur came from the word Budue in the Minangebau language which means prominent, jutting out. Therefore, in his opinion, Borobudur should be translated as the prominent Vihara on the hilltop. But Mr. Jumnong Tongprasert said that the word Borobudur was a deviation of the words Parama and Buddha which means the great Buddhist Vihara.⁶⁴

Buddhism entered Indonesia in the first part of the first century (1-100 A.D. / 544-643 B.E.) via the water Silk Road between India and Indonesia through Buddhist merchants. Buddhism reached its height during the reign of the Sailendra Dynasty in 1293 – 1393 B.E. The kings of this dynasty were adherents of Vajrayana Buddhism and Borobudur was built in 1323 – 1376 B.E. It was the first great Buddhist monument in Southeast Asia. Its architecture exerted an influence on Buddhist monuments built in later times such as Angkor Wat in Cambodia.

Near the end of the 12th century⁶⁵ Arabian merchants brought Islam to Indonesia and it spread throughout the country around the 14th century at the time when Buddhism was going through a decline. Borobudur was abandoned and became overgrown with vegetation. It was not until 2357 B.E. that Sir Thomas Raffles discovered Borobudur and the monument had been preserved through several restorations. The largest restoration project was undertaken between 2515 and 2525 B.E., by the Indonesian government and UNESCO. After the work was done, it was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

⁶² Wikipedia (B.E. 2549) Indonesia

⁶³ It is the day after the end of Ramadan. It is a time of rejoicing and feasting. Houses are decorated, Moslems buy gifts for their relatives, etc.

⁶⁴ Jumnong Tongprasert (2536 B.E.) Borobudur (online)

⁶⁵ The twelfth century is 1101 – 1200 AD or 1644 – 1743 B.E.

Since the 14th century, Islam has flourished but the tiny Buddhist population in Indonesia has managed to perpetuate Buddhism there. From time to time, Buddhists from other countries went to help revive Buddhism in Indonesia. In 2512 B.E., the Thai monks sent Dhamma envoys to Indonesia and opened the Phra Buddha Metta office in Jakarta as the center for spreading Buddhism. Today, Indonesia has about 150 Buddhist temples; one hundred of which are Mahayana temples and fifty are Theravada temples. These temples are under the care of householders, since there are few Buddhist monks in Indonesia.

5.2.5 Buddhism in Southwest Asia

Southwest Asia consists of Anatolia or Asia Minor which includes the Asian part of Turkey⁶⁶ and Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea. Countries in the Near East include Syria, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq. The Middle East includes all the countries in the Arabian Peninsula: Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Yemen and may include Kuwait, Iran, and Afghanistan. Today, the Middle East is a Moslem region. Here, we will mention only the history of Buddhism in Afghanistan because there is clear evidence that Buddhism used to flourish there.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan's official name is the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Its capital and largest city is Kabul. It has a population of 31,056,997 (as of 2549 B.E.), 98% are Moslems, 83.2% are Zuni Moslems and 14.9% are Shiite Moslems, 1.4% are adherents of Zoroaster, 0.4% are Hindus, and 0.1% are Christians.⁶⁷

Buddhists worldwide have heard about Afghanistan when the Zuni Moslems who called themselves the Taliban destroyed the two standing Buddha Images in March, 2544 B.E. amidst the harsh criticism of UNESCO⁶⁸ and Buddhists worldwide. The larger Buddha Image stood at 53 meters tall whereas the smaller one stood at 38 meters tall. Both Buddha Images were around two thousand years old. They had been carved into the cliff-face of the town of Bamiyan in central Afghanistan.

These Buddha Images attested to the fact that over two thousand years ago, the people of Afghanistan were Buddhists. This country was situated on the route by which Buddhism from India entered Central Asia, China, Korea, Japan, and Mongolia. Buddhist monks from these areas used this route during their pilgrimage to India. This route was called the land Silk Road. Several civilizations such as the Greek Civilization, the Iranian Civilization, and the Persian Civilization had also passed through Afghanistan.

Archaeologists knew that Buddhism used to flourish in Afghanistan judging from the many Buddhist relics present there especially those in Bamiyan, Jalalabad, Kandahar, and Ghazni. During the Lord Buddha's time, this region was known as the kingdoms of Gandhara and Kamboja. Asoka the Great called this region the kingdom of Yonaka while during the time of Venerable Tang Sum Jang this region was known as the kingdoms of Udayana, Gandhara, and Kapisa.

⁶⁶ 97% of Turkey is part of Asia.

⁶⁷ Wikipedia (2549 B.E.) Afghanistan

⁶⁸ UNESCO is the initials of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Buddhism entered Afghanistan during the Lord Buddha's time when the two merchant brothers, Tapussa and Bhallika, met the Lord Buddha and declared themselves Buddhists. Before their departure, they asked for two strands of the Lord Buddha's hair so that they could be enshrined in the stupa in the kingdom of Udayana which is now Afghanistan.⁶⁹ In addition, King Pukkusati of Taxila City⁷⁰ was a friend of King Bimbisara of Rajagarh City, and King Pukkusati was a Buddhist as well. And it was through Taxila City that Buddhism entered nearby Afghanistan.

Buddhism flourished in this region during the reign of Asoka the Great. At the time, it was the group of monks led by Venerable Majjhantika Thera that came to spread Theravada Buddhism in this area. They spent the Rains-Retreat in the cities of Mathura and Kipin.⁷¹

The Indo-Greek king, Milinda⁷², was in power around 500 B.E. His kingdom included the area which is now Afghanistan, Pakistan, north India, south Uzbekistan, and some parts of Iran. He supported Buddhism and Buddhism flourished in this region during his reign. King Milinda was the first person to build a Buddha Image. This first Buddha Image was created in the Gandhara Style which was a mixture of Greek, Roman, and Buddhist concepts.

King Kanishka was in power from 621 to 644 B.E. His kingdom included the Kabul River valley in Afghanistan, Gandhara and Sindhu in Pakistan, Cashmere, Madhyama in India and some of the countries in Central Asia. He was a devout Buddhist. And he sponsored the fourth Sangiti which is not recognized by Theravada Buddhism. This Sangiti played a key role in categorizing the Dhamma-Vinaya. During King Kanishka's reign, Buddhism spread to all of Central Asia, some parts of Iran, China, and Korea.

It was during King Kanishka's reign that Buddhism became the state religion of Afghanistan and many Buddhist structures were constructed. There was an increase in the number of Buddhist monks and some of them went to spread Buddhism in Central Asia. Later, two large Buddha Images, one was larger than the other, were carved into the cliff-face of the Bamiyan valley. Each took at least 200 years to finish. Many caves were also dug into the cliff face in order to provide lodging for Buddhist monks.

⁶⁹ Tapussa and Bhallika were the Mon merchants from Burma and they enshrined the Lord Buddha's hair in the Shwedagon Pagoda in Burma.

⁷⁰ Taxila City was in the kingdom of Gandhara which is now part of Pakistan. It shares its border with Afghanistan, India, Iran, and China.

⁷¹ Kipin or Kapisa is now in Afghanistan

⁷² He was also referred to as King Menander or Menandros.

Since Afghanistan was in the middle between Arabia and India and one had to pass through it in order to get to China, it was routinely invaded by various peoples such as the Greeks, the Mongols, the Huns, the Arabians, the British, and the Russians. Destruction to Buddhism and Buddhist structures was wrought by the Arabian Moslem army, and the people were forced to convert to Islam. In 1252 B.E., the king of Bamiyan and the rulers of other cities had to convert to Islam for the sake of their own survival. Once the leaders of the land became Moslems, it meant a decline for Buddhism. After the land had been taken over by Islam for just one hundred years, Afghanistan became completely empty of Buddhist monks. And the more than 3,000 Buddhist Structures reported in Venerable Tang Sum Jang's travel journals became mere ruins. It is for these reasons that Afghanistan is now the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

5.2.5 Buddhism in Central Asia

Central Asia connects Asia to Europe. Central Asia consists of different countries and includes Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Today, Central Asia is a Moslem region with hardly any Buddhists in it even though Buddhism used to flourish here during the time when people used the Silk Road to trade between Europe and Asia.

Buddhism entered Central Asia during the reign of Asoka the Great and it flourished during the reign of King Kanishka. Moreover, Central Asia was where Buddhism spread to China. Buddhism flourished in this region for around a thousand years until 1200 B.E. when the Moslem army began to march into Central Asia. After their conquest, the people were forced to convert to Islam.

Historical information pertaining to Buddhism in Central Asia is quite scant but evidences of Buddhism in this region were discovered by a Russian archaeologist around 2500 B.E. For example, in 2504 B.E., the Archaeology Department of Russia discovered several Buddhist relics in Uzbekistan.⁷³ They were scattered throughout the different towns in the south in an area bordering Afghanistan. These towns included Smarkand, Bukhara, Termez, etc. A carved statue was discovered showing the two Chief Disciples standing beside the Lord Buddha.⁷⁴ This is a Theravada Buddha Statue. Another Buddha Statue was discovered. It shows a Bodhisattva standing beside the Lord Buddha, an indication of Mahayana Buddhism.

In the same year, Russian archaeologists discovered a reclining Buddha Statue fourteen meters long and two and a half meters high at Ajina-tepe Temple on the southern hillside of Tajikistan. He also discovered hundreds of small Buddha Statues, some of them were still in perfect condition. Locals call this mountain the Mountain of One Thousand Buddhas' Houses. Archaeologists believed the large reclining Buddha Statue to be built around 800 B.E. during the time that Kusana ruled Central Asia. Today, these Buddha Statues are housed in the Dushanbe Museum in Tajikistan.

Russian archaeologists had carried out an archaeological dig in one of the important ancient sites called Giaur Kala in 2505 B.E. in the south of Turkmenistan. They discovered the head of a large Buddha Statue more than a meter in size. They also found a large number of pieces of Buddha Statues and Bodhisattva statues around the area. Today, the Buddha Statues are housed in the museum. In addition, two stupas were discovered in the town of Merv.

ASSIGNMENTS

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

⁷³ At the time, Uzbekistan and other countries in Central Asia were still part of the Soviet Union. Their existence as separate countries did not occur until the fall of the Soviet Union in 2534 B.E.

⁷⁴ This is a Gandhara style Buddha Statue. It was found at Fayazdepa Temple and is now kept in the museum.

CHAPTER 6

BUDDHISM IN THE WEST

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 6

BUDDHISM IN THE WEST

- 6.1 An Overview of Buddhism in the West
- 6.2 The History of Buddhism in the West
- 6.3 The Reason Some Westerners Convert to Buddhism

CONCEPTS

1. Currently, Buddhism is growing rapidly in the West. It is growing faster than other religions as seen in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Switzerland, the United States, and Canada. Buddhism is also growing in Australia and New Zealand.
2. Buddhism became known throughout the West during the 24th and 25th century B.E. Theravada Buddhism entered the West in the 24th century B.E. but was known mainly in the academic circle. By the 25th century B.E., Mahayana Buddhism especially Zen Buddhism and Vajrayana Buddhism entered the West and was well accepted by academicians as well as the general public.

Westerners convert to Buddhism because they no longer believe in their former religion which teaches unconditional faith. They deem the teaching of blind faith to be conflicting with the scientific principles that are operating in their everyday life. In contrast, Buddhism is the religion of peace and blind faith is discouraged. Moreover, Buddhism challenges people to validate the Lord Buddha's Teachings. Buddhist teachings are about cause and effect. And whoever practices the Lord Buddha's Teachings earnestly will definitely achieve the expected results.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to gain an overview of Buddhism in the West in the present days and where it is flourishing.
2. To enable the student to understand the movement of Buddhism in the West from the past up to the present time. Here, only six countries in the West, the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, France, Italy, the United States, and one country in Oceania, Australia, will be mentioned. The student will also learn about the reason that causes some Westerners to convert to Buddhism.

BUDDHISM IN THE WEST

6.1 An Overview of Buddhism in the West

Buddhism has been generating a lot of interest in the West and it is experiencing a rapid growth. From Henry C. Finney's study, it is found that in Germany the rate at which meditation center is being opened increases tenfold within the short span of 22 years. In 2518 B.E. there were about 40 meditation centers in Germany but in 2540 B.E., the number increased to 400. The number of meditation centers in the United Kingdom increases about 4.5 times in eighteen years. In 2522 B.E. there were around 74 meditation centers but in 2540 B.E. the number increased to 340.¹

A survey of French youth in 2540 B.E. showed that five million French youths were happy with the Buddhist teachings.² In 2503 B.E. there were about 200,000 Buddhists in the United States.³ However, in 2547 B.E., the number increased to three millions.⁴ In other words, the rate of increase is 15-fold in just 44 years. Henry C. Finney also found that Buddhism is experiencing a rapid growth in Australia. In 2524 B.E., there were 35,000 Buddhists in Australia but in 2534 B.E. the number increased four-fold to 140,000. In researching the growth of different religions in Australia between 2529 to 2544 B.E., it was found that Buddhism had the highest growth rate. The data are shown in the following table.

Australian Capital Territory⁵

Religion	2529	2534	2539	2544	% Population	% Increase
Christianity	11,381,900	12,465,644	12,582,764	12,764,341	68	1.5
Buddhism	80,387	139,847	199,812	357,813	1.9	79.1
Hinduism	-	-	67,279	95,473	0.5	41.9
Islam	109,500	147,507	200,885	281,578	1.5	40.2
Judaism	69,100	74,386	79,805	83,995	0.4	5.3

¹ Martin Baumann (2541 B.E.) Working in the Right Spirit: The Application of Buddhist Right Livelihood in the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

² Lionel Obadia (2540 B.E.) Tibetan Buddhism in France: A Missionary Religion?

³ Jan Nattlier (2543 B.E.) Why Buddhism? Why Now? And why in America?

⁴ The U.S. State Department's International Religious Freedom as referenced by Wikipedia (2549 B.E.) Buddhism in the United States.

⁵ The Buddhist Council of New South Wales (2549 B.E.) Analysis of Religious Growth in Australia.

Although the number of Buddhists in the West and Oceania is relatively small compared to the number of people who subscribe to Theism⁶, the high growth rate of Buddhism is an indication that the number of Buddhists will increase dramatically in the future. It must also be taken into account the fact that generally Westerners who subscribe to other beliefs outside their own religion tend to keep their new beliefs to themselves. One example is the English poet and journalist Sir Edwin Arnold who is the author of the book “The Light of Asia”. He did not make his faith in Buddhism known to the public because Christians consider those who convert to another religion to be highly reprehensible.⁷

As a result, it is very difficult to estimate the real number of Buddhists in the West and Oceania. Jan Nattlier said that in the United States, there are more than ten million so-called night-stand Buddhists.⁸ These Americans admire Buddhist teachings and live their lives by them but do not declare themselves Buddhists.

Buddhism became widely known in the West around the 19th century⁹ especially in the latter half of the century where Western philosophers started to write books about Buddhism. Arthur Schopenhauer was a German philosopher who praised Buddhism in his writings and his books have inspired a large number of Westerners to study Buddhism. Professor Rhys Davids was a British scholar of the Pali language and the founder of the Pali Text Society who had translated the Tripitaka and other Buddhist texts into English. Dr. James Martin Peebles was an American spiritual philosopher who made popular the book called “Controversy at Panadura”. The book is a written record of the debate held between Buddhism (Venerable Gunananda Thera) and Christianity (Christian priests).

A large number of Westerners learn about Buddhism through the work of Sir Edwin Arnold, “the Light of Asia”, which was about the Lord Buddha’s history. The book has been printed more than 150 times since 2470 B.E. In that period, Buddhism in the West was Theravada Buddhism and its following were academicians and avid readers mostly in the United Kingdom and Germany. There were many Theravada philosophers in these countries as well. Buddhism in this period did not spread to the general public.

Mahayana Buddhism spread to the West in the 20th century.¹⁰ The different schools of Mahayana Buddhism and their simple teachings attracted the interest of a large number of Westerners in the academic circle as well the general public. Mahayana Buddhism entered the West later but it proved more popular than Theravada Buddhism. Using the Google search engine to search for the word “Zen” produces 74,400,000 entries whereas the word “Theravada” produces only 1,390,000 entries.¹¹ The entries for Zen are fifty times higher than the entries for Theravada and if the entries for all the Mahayana schools are included, the result may be one hundred times higher.

⁶ Theism is any religion that believe in God such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

⁷ Colonel Nuam Sa-nguansup, **Western Buddhist Philosophers**, vol. 1, p. 110-116

⁸ Jan Nattlier (B.E. 2543) **Why Buddhism? Why now? And why in America?**

⁹ This corresponds with 1801 – 1900 or 2344 – 2443 B.E.

¹⁰ This is 1901 to 2000 or 2444 to 2543 B.E.

¹¹ Google (2549 B.E.) Zen, Theravada

Such data is an indication that Mahayana Buddhism is highly popular. Some of these Mahayana schools include the Zaizen School from Japan founded by Dr. D.T. Suzuki. Mahayana Buddhism from Taiwan is propagated by the monks of Fo Guang Shan Temple and its more than 250 branches worldwide.¹² Zen Buddhism from Vietnam led by Thich Nat Hanh has attracted hundreds of thousands of people.¹³ The Nichiren School better known as Soka Gakkai International (SGI) has more than twelve million members worldwide.¹⁴

The most popular Vajrayana Buddhism is the Tibetan school led by the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, the current leader of Tibetans and Tibetan monks. He has traveled to more than 52 countries worldwide to meet and exchange ideas with the leaders of these mostly Non-Buddhist countries. He has written more than fifty books and has received more than 57 awards as well as the Nobel Peace Prize in 2532 B.E.¹⁵ It is for these reasons that Tibetan Buddhism has become very popular in the West.

If we look up the number of Buddhist centers in www.buddhanet.net, we will see that the Tibetan school and the Zen school are highly popular in the West. These centers as shown in the following table can be a temple, a meditation center, a Buddhist organization, etc. In reality, the number of Buddhist centers is higher, since there are many centers that do not report their presence to this website. There are other websites which give the latest figures but they do not include every Buddhist school; therefore, only the data given by this website is used here.

¹² Venerable Zin Ting, referenced by the Daily News (2549 B.E.), Propagation of Buddhism: Strategy Changes (online)

¹³ Helen Trokof (2538 B.E.) An interview in Tricycle

¹⁴ SGI (2549 B.E.) Soka Gakkai International

¹⁵ www.buddhanet.net (2549 B.E.) Buddhist Masters and Their Organizations

Buddhist Centers Worldwide

Buddhist Centers ¹⁶		Theravada	Mahayana				Others ¹⁷	Buddhists ¹⁸	
Country	Total		Total	Tibetan	Zen	Others		No. of Buddhists	B.E.
1. The American Continent									
The United States	1,835	253	1,446	548	644 ¹⁹	254	136	3,000,000	2547
Canada	262	49	175	83	29	63	38		
Mexico	44	5	25	17	8		14		
Central America	19		13	8	3	2	6		
South America	228	12	178	83	70	25	38		
2. Europe									
Germany	661	57	568	321	208	29	46	230,000	2549
Russia	448 ²⁰			8 ²¹				700,000	
The United Kingdom	435	95	213	89	60	27	127	151,283	2544
France	334	19	199	100	7,128	116			
Switzerland	139	20	110	71	25	14	9		
Italy	110	15	76	47	37	1	10	110,000	
Spain	105	4	87	51	33	3	14		
The Netherlands	88	11	62	30	27	5	15		
Poland	84	1	74	53	21	-	9		
Czech and Slovak	78	8	67	55	12	-	3		
Austria	77	7	60	40	13	7	10		
Belgium	60	8	45	8	26	11	7		
Other countries in Europe	297	33	237	153	54	30	27		

¹⁶ www.buddhanet.net (2549 B.E.) Buddhist Directory

¹⁷ These centers do not say which Buddhist school they belong to.

¹⁸ Wikipedia (2549 B.E.) Religion

¹⁹ Latest update: 842 Centers (Thomas Kirchner (2549 B.E.) Zen Centers –U.S.A.

²⁰ Igor Troyanovsky (2544 B.E.) Buddhism in Russia (online)

²¹ Thomas Kirchner (2546 B.E.) Zen Centers – Russia (online)

Buddhist Centers Worldwide

Buddhist Centers		Theravada	Mahayana				Others	Buddhists	
Country	Total		Total	Tibetan	Zen	Others		No. of Buddhists	B.E.
3. Asia²²									
Middle East	28	4	12	5	7		12		
4. The African Continent									
Africa	51	11	33	10	12	11	7		
5. Oceania									
Australia	412	92	234	107	22	105	86		
New Zealand	93	26	55	31	13	11	12		
Total	5,872	730	3,969	1,910	1,403	626	742		

²² No current data about other countries in Asia is available.

6.2 The History of Buddhism in the West

The first time westerners were exposed to Buddhism was when Alexander the Great and his army invaded India in 326 to 323 B.C. which corresponded to 217 to 220 B.E. or 217 to 220 years after the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana. At the time, the original Buddhism or Theravada Buddhism was flourishing in India. During the three years of Greek occupation in India, it was possible that some cultural exchange between the two countries had taken place. Greek soldiers might have experienced Buddhism through the Buddhist lifestyle of the Indian Buddhists to a more or less extent and upon their return to Macedonia, they might have told their relatives and friends about their experiences in India.

Once Alexander the Great and his army left India, Chandragupta was able to take the city of Pataliputra from the Greek king, Nanda, and proclaimed himself the first king of the Moriya Dynasty in 322 B.E. He ruled Pataliputra for 26 years. During this period, Megasthenes, the ambassador from Greece's Alexandria arrived in Pataliputra. He had kept a journal about the Brahmins and ascetics in India and his journal had been used as a reference by many Greek and Latin writers in later years.

Asoka the Great (267 – 312 B.E.) had sent Dhamma envoys to spread Buddhism in different lands. Mr. Stira Potinanta, a Buddhist scholar, said that during that period Buddhism had spread to Greece and Europe.²³

The word "Buddha" first appeared in a Greek document 500 years after Megasthenes died. It was written in 743 B.E. that the Indian people strictly observe the Buddha's Precepts and worship the Buddha as though he was God...²⁴ For a long period afterward, the Europeans heard nothing more about Buddhism. In 1797 B.E., the Christian priest Wilhelm van Louisbourg and a Franciscan priest, who had stayed in the city of Garakoram for six months, wrote a book called "Itinerarim". In it was an accurate account of Tibetan lamas and how they chanted "Om mani padme hum".

Westerners received an accurate and detailed account of Buddhism from the book "Description of the World" by Marco Polo who had lived in China for 16 years between 1271 and 1295 B.E. He had met many Chinese Buddhists during his stay. He wrote, "Zaju Tambon is in the town of Tankook. The people here worship the Buddha Statue except for the Turks and some Zarazen Christians. These people worship the Buddha Statue and have their own spoken language. They do not trade but support themselves by cultivating grains. There are many Buddhist monks and Buddhist temples. These temples contain different Buddha Statues and the people worship these Buddha Statues with all their hearts..."²⁵

²³ Stira Potinanta, **The History of Buddhism**, 2541 B.E., p. 189

²⁴ Colonel Nuam Sa-nguansup, **Religious Social Science**, p. 2-3

²⁵ Ibid.

When Marco Polo returned to Italy with stories about Buddhists and Buddhism, few Italians believed him. Later, Pope Nicholas IV sent his priest to investigate Buddhism in China. The first priest sent by the Pope was John of Montecorvino. He stayed in China for many years and had sent many letters to the Pope telling him about Buddhism in China. Afterward, priests were sent to China from time to time and the accounts of these priests' travels generated a great deal of interest among the Europeans. In 2085 B.E., the priest Franciscus Xaverius of Spain traveled to India and a year later to Gwa. There, he met a Japanese merchant called Yagiuro who told him about the Lord Buddha's history and His Teachings. Accounts of these Christian priests about Buddhism were sent back to Europe. These accounts were not published but most were kept in the library.

During the period of colonialism from the 17th century or 2144 B.E. onward, many western countries were out to establish colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. These western countries included the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, Russia, and the United States. Many of the less developed countries in Asia, Africa, and Oceania fell under colonial rule. During this period, there was a great deal of cultural exchange and quite a few Westerners were exposed to Buddhism. At the same time, many groups of missionaries were dispatched to spread Christianity in China, Japan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia. Colonial powers forced the people in their colonies to convert to Christianity. But at the same time, some Westerners converted to Buddhism. Moreover, accounts about Buddhism had been sent back to the West and many Westerners had the opportunity to learn about Buddhism through these accounts.

The reports about Buddhism sent back to the West by the missionaries were obtained mainly through observing the Buddhists and their ways and talking to them rather than from researching the Buddhist Scriptures. In the 19th century (1801 – 1900 or 2344 – 2443 B.E.), the first Pali grammar book was published in Europe. From this work, we learn that the first European to study Pali is the priest Simon de la Loubere who was a member of the diplomatic envoys sent by Louis XIV to Thailand during the reign of King Narai in 2230 -2231 B.E. Simon de la Loubere published a book titled "Description du Royaume de Siam" in 2234 B.E. In this book, he gave a brief description of Venerable Devadat's life and the Patimokkha. The 20th century was the golden age for Mahayana Buddhism and many members of its different schools went to spread the teachings in the West. And the result is an increase in the number of Buddhists in the West.

6.2.1 The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom's official name is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It includes England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. It has a population of 60,441,457 (as of July 2548 B.E.), and about 70 -80% are Christians. The 2001 UK Census indicated that 9,337,580 people were non-religious.²⁶ The BBC Survey found that as of 2547 B.E., 40% of the people in the U.K. are atheists or agnostics.²⁷

The 2001 UK Census showed that there were 151,283 Buddhists in the country. Today, there are 435 Buddhist organizations in the United Kingdom and the number is expected to increase in the future. Although the number of Buddhists in the United Kingdom is still very small, many of them are Buddhist scholars. One example is Professor Rhys Davids. He founded the Pali Text Society which does the work of translating Buddhist Scriptures from Pali into different languages and making the Lord Buddha's Teachings widely available to the general public.

Dr. Richard Morris, President of the Etymology Society praised Professor Rhys Davids in his speech in 2418 B.E. to the effect that there are many Pali scholars in this country but Professor Rhys Davids is the only one who created a Pali educational institution in the West. He paves the way for Buddhism to become a household word. He demonstrates the value of Buddhism as the language of special knowledge. He also demonstrates the relationship between religion and humanity.²⁸

Buddhism entered the United Kingdom around 2393 B.E. through the book about Eastern religions written by Spencer Argy, albeit the fact that the book was not widely read. It was not until Sir Edwin Arnold's book "The Light of Asia" became widely available in 2422 B.E. that Westerners began to show a real interest in Buddhism. Sir Edwin's book has been reprinted more than 150 times since 2470 B.E.

Sir Edwin Arnold wrote this book during the time when the British Empire was having problems with its colonies in the East. He did his writing in Hamlet House as well as during his train rides. He would write on the back of envelopes, on the edge of newspapers, on the back of restaurant menu. He even wrote a poem on his cuff links. If a pen was not available, he would use a pencil. If he did not have a pencil, he would use a charred kindling from the fireplace. The king of Thailand presented him with a white elephant decoration in recognition of his work for Buddhism. In the royal message which accompanied the decoration, the king said that although his explanation of Buddhism is not entirely accurate, the king is thankful to Sir Edwin Arnold for having written about Buddhism in English, the most widely used language in the world.

²⁶ Wikipedia (2549 B.E.) Religions in the United Kingdom

²⁷ Wikipedia (2549 B.E.) Atheism Studies and Statistics

²⁸ Colonel Nuam Sa-nguansup, **Western Buddhist Philosophers**, vol. 1, p. 27

Professor T.W. Rhys Davids founded the Pali Text Society in 2424 B.E. He stated that he founds the society because he is determined to make available to the public the great treasure trove represented by the Buddhist Scriptures. These Scriptures have not been published to date and have not been made use of in one's daily life. These Scriptures have been scattered and kept in different university libraries as well as in the different public libraries all throughout Europe.²⁹ The first two books of the Tripitaka written in English in 2438 and 2442 B.E. were printed as part of the Sacred Books of the Buddhist Series. The project was funded by King Rama V of the Kingdom of Thailand. The printing of the third and fourth books was funded by King Rama VI.

Once Buddhism became more widely known to the British people some of them decided to undertake ordination. In 2442 B.E., Gordon Douglas became the first British and the first westerner to undertake ordination in the city of Colombo, Sri Lanka. His ordained name was Asoka.

In 2445 B.E., Charles Henry Allen Bennett decided to undertake ordination as a result of having read the book "The Light of Asia". He ordained in Colombo and his ordained name was Anandamaitaiya. One year after he entered the monkhood, he traveled to Burma and later published in Burma a monthly journal in English called "The Buddhist". The journal presented news about Buddhism worldwide. He was assisted in this work by Venerable Silacara, a Scot who ordained in Burma. "The Buddhist" was also sold in Great Britain. Both monks wanted to make Buddhism, which was being studied mainly in universities available to the general public so that Buddhism could become an integral part of people's life. Venerable Anandamaitaiya was the first monk to lead the Dhamma envoys from Burma to spread Buddhism in the West.

Buddhism began to leave college campuses and enter the mainstream when R. J. Jackson declared publicly without any fear of reprisals that he was a Buddhist who lived his life according to Buddhist Principles. He could be said to be the first British Buddhist who made his conviction public. In 2449 B.E., R. J. Jackson began to spread Buddhism by giving lectures in public parks standing on a soap box.

In the same period, J. R. Pain, a former soldier, who used to be stationed in Burma, opened up a bookshop selling books about Buddhism on Berry Street in Boomberry. "The Buddhist" was sold there as well. This journal was quite popular among the British. Later, R. J. Jackson and J. R. Pain worked together to found the first Buddhist Society in London. In 2450 B.E., with the help of Professor Rhys Davids and Venerable Anandamaitaiya, this society became the Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland. The society was chaired by Professor Rhys Davids and it also published its own Buddhist journal.

²⁹ SE-ED.net (2549 B.E.), English Tripitaka (online)

Different Buddhist societies began to be formed in different parts of the United Kingdom. In 2491 B.E., Mrs. A. Rant founded the Buddhist Vihara Society of England. She had also encouraged like-minded people to help fund the building of the Buddhist Vihara Temple in London in 2497 B.E. Initially, it was built on a rented lot in Ovington Garden and the Sri Lankan monk, Venerable Dr. H. Saddhatissa became its abbot. Later, a parcel of land was purchased for the new temple. It is located at 5, Heathfield Gardens, London, W4. Venerable Saddhatissa was a gifted Dhamma lecturer and about 200 people attended his temple regularly, most of them were British. In those days, there was a “Buddhist Study Circle” in most of the large cities in the United Kingdom. And these circles did the work of spreading the Dhamma to the British people.

Besides Sri Lankan monks, monks from other Asian countries such as Burma, China, Japan, etc., also went to spread Buddhist teachings in the West. The first Sangha Community was formed in the United Kingdom on January 27, 2499 B.E. The community was formed in order to make the work of spreading Buddhism more effective. It was formed by Venerable Kapilavaddho (W. A. Purfust) who was ordained at Wat Paknam in Bangkok in 2497 B.E. In 2510 B.E., the British monk, Venerable Sangharaksitasathavira, who was ordained in India, founded “The Friends of the Western Buddhists Order (FWBO)” in the United Kingdom. Today, FWBO is a leading Buddhist organization which has many branches all over the United Kingdom.

The Thai Sangha Community was invited by the President of the British Sangha Society in 2507 B.E. to send Dhamma envoys to spread Buddhism in the United Kingdom. Thailand’s Field Marshall at the time, Thanom Kittikajorn was in favor of the idea. The first group of Dhamma envoys included Venerable Phrarajsiddhimuni (Chodok, graduate of the ninth level in Pali studies), Venerable Phramahavijit Tissadatto, and a lay devotee Mr. Bhanupong Mutukan. The mission was to last three years and the work started on May 25, 2507 B.E.

Sometime later, Thai Buddhists in the United Kingdom had made donations to fund the building of the first Thai temple in London. The temple was finished in 2508 B.E. Its opening ceremony was presided by the king and queen of Thailand. They named the temple “Wat Buddhaprteep”. Later still, many Thai Buddhist temples were built. These included Wat Sanghadana (2532 B.E.), Wat Pacittaviveka (2539 B.E.), Wat Buddhavihara (2537 B.E.), etc. Many Buddhist organizations were formed such as the International Vipassana Meditation Center (2514 B.E.), etc.

The first Mahayana school to arrive in the United Kingdom is Soka Gakkai International or SGI, a branch of the Mahayana Nichiren School. It began in 2503 B.E. with just one member. This school has enjoyed a rapid growth and today Soka Gakkai is the largest Buddhist organization in the United Kingdom with more than 450 groups.³⁰

³⁰ SGI-UK (2549 B.E.) Soka Gakkai International

Note: Very little information about SGI-UK can be found in the website www.buddhanet.net. Given the many Buddhist schools worldwide, it is difficult to find information about every school in just one website.

In 2515 B.E., Peggy Kennett, a British Bhikkuni of the Soto Zen School in Japan founded the British Zen Mission Society in the United Kingdom. The name was later changed to “The Order of Buddhist Contemplatives” or OBC. It is currently the largest Zen organization in the United Kingdom and the fourth largest of all the Buddhist schools. The first largest group is SGI. The second is FWBO founded by Venerable Sangharaksitasathavira. The third is the Tibetan NKT. Originally, Peggy Kennett had been a Theravada Buddhist but was persuaded to convert to Zen Buddhism by Dr. D. T. Suzuki. She was ordained as a Bhikkuni by the Chinese Sangha in Malaysia and later went to study Zen Buddhism in Japan.

In 2534 B.E., the Tibetan monk called Geshe Kelsang Gyatso founded the New Kadampa Tradition or NKT in the United Kingdom. Of all the Tibetan schools in the United Kingdom, this school has been the most successful. NKT belongs to the school of Kadam or Gelug led by the Dalai Lama of Tibet.

6.2.2 Germany

Germany's official name is the Federal Republic of Germany. It has a population of 82,438,000 (as of 2548 B.E.), about 68% are Christians. In surveying more than 10,000 groups of Germans in 2549 B.E., it was found that 29.6% or 24,400,000 Germans were non-religious or atheists. The 2549 B.E., survey also revealed that there were about 230,000 Buddhists in Germany. There were 661 Buddhist organizations³¹ and the number was expected to increase in the future.

Buddhism became known in Germany through the writing of Isaac Jacob Schmidt (2322 – 2390 B.E.).³² But the person who played a key role in spreading Buddhism in Germany was Arthur Schopenhauer. He studied Buddhism through Isaac Jacob Schmidt's writing. Schmidt later wrote a book called "The World as Will and Representation". It was published in 2362 B.E. He also wrote many other books. During the first twenty-five years of the 19th century, his books enjoyed the widest readership and his books have helped many Germans to convert to Buddhism.

Arthur Schopenhauer had this to say about Buddhism, "It is evident that the oldest language is the most perfect language. Likewise, the oldest religion is the most perfect religion. If the fruits of my philosophy is regarded as the standard of truth, then I hold the concepts of Buddhism to be more outstanding than other religious concepts... The objective of Sakyamuni Buddha is to separate the seed from the shell in that outstanding and noble teachings are separated from the mixture of imagination and devas. He has made the value and inner purity of Buddhism easy to understand. Sakyamuni Buddha has been most amazingly successful. Therefore, His religion is the best religion and should have the highest number of adherents."³³

Friedrich Zimmermann, the German civil engineer was another person inspired by Schopenhauer's books. He became a devout Buddhist, and in 2423 B.E., he changed his name to "Bhikkusubhadda" although he did not become a monk. He wrote the book "Buddhistischen Katechismus" which contains questions and answers about Buddhism based mainly on the Suttantapitaka and the Vinayapitaka. The book was published in 2431 B.E. and it enjoyed a wide readership in different countries just as the book "The light of Asia" did. The book was reprinted 14 times and had been translated into English, French, Japanese, Italian, Hungarian, Spanish, and Russian.

Buddhism in Germany was initially spread through books. It was not until 2446 B.E. that the first Buddhist organization in Germany was formed. The Society for Buddhist Mission in Leipzig, Germany was founded by Dr. Karl Seidenstuecker who was the leader of a group of German Buddhists. Dr. Karl Seidenstuecker was lauded as the Apostle of Buddhism in Germany. He had been able to harmonize together the ways of Eastern Buddhists and German Buddhists. He also initiated the founding of the German branch of Mahabodhi Society in Germany.

³¹ www.buddhanet.net (2549 B.E.) Buddhist directory

³² REMID (2549 B.E.) Religions in Germany as referenced by Wikipedia (2549 B.E.) Religions in Germany

³³ Colonel Nuam Sa-nguansup, **Religious Social Science**, p. 287

The first German who ordained as a Buddhist monk under Theravada Buddhism was Anton Walter Florus Gueth. His ordained name was Nyanatiloka. He was ordained in Rangoon, Burma in 2447 B.E. He was the student of the British monk, Venerable Anandamaitaiya. Venerable Nyanatiloka Maha Thera was a highly respected monk among the western monks because he practiced righteousness according to the Dhamma-Vinaya and had devoted his life to the propagation of Buddhism. Having entered the monkhood, he traveled to Sri Lanka and stayed at a small uninhabited island in Dodanduva Lake. This island was full of poisonous snakes. He undertook Rukhamula Dhutanga by practicing meditation day and night. Every morning, some Sri Lankan lay devotees would come by boat and bring him food. While practicing meditation under a tree, poisonous snakes could be seen crawling all around the tree. Sometimes, they crawled across his lap but they did not harm him. Later, some Sri Lankan lay devotees decided to build a hut for him.

Soon, many Westerners from Germany, the United Kingdom, France, the United States, Denmark, and Italy undertook ordination and went to live with Venerable Nyanatiloka Maha Thera in this island. This island became famous for being a place where monks from the West, who practiced righteousness according to the Dhamma-Vinaya, came to practice meditation. On every Buddhist Holy Day and the day of the full-moon, hundreds of Sri Lankans from every part of the country would go there to make a food-offering, chant, and listen to Dhamma lectures. Venerable Nyanatiloka Maha Thera's first book, "The World of the Buddha" was published in 2449 B.E., and this book made him famous. It was translated and printed in nine languages. In some languages, 10,000 copies of his book were sold out in no time. The book was reprinted many times and for a long time. Venerable Nyanatiloka Maha Thera passed away on November 28, 2500 B.E. The Sri Lankan government honored him with a proper cremation attended by 500,000 Sri Lankans. The urn containing his ashes was placed at the Independence Square in the city of Colombo. Before he passed away, the venerable monk made a resolute wish to return as a man to Sri Lanka so that he could ordain as a Buddhist monk.

In order to spread Buddhism more widely in Germany, German Buddhists under the leadership of Venerable Dhammasari established a publishing house called Breslau in 2452 B.E. The sole purpose of the publishing house is to print copies of their Buddhist journal so that they could be distributed widely. In the same year, the German Pali Society was founded. Its main aim was to build Buddhist temples in the West. This society closed down three years later. In 2456 B.E., the League for Buddhist Life was founded in order to spread Theravada Buddhism.

The propagation of Buddhism in Germany proceeded better when one German man became a believer of the Lord Buddha's Teachings. His name was George Grimm. His parents wanted him to become a Catholic priest. But having read Arthur Schopenhauer's books on philosophy coupled with the fact that Schopenhauer held Buddhism in the highest regards and proclaimed himself a Buddhist, Grimm decided to study Buddhism instead. As a result, he left his job in the Justice Department in order to take up Buddhist studies and help propagate the Dhamma. He declared that he would practice the Dhamma until he could attain the Fruit of Sotapanna within this lifetime.

In 2464 B.E., George Grimm and Dr. Karl Seidenstuecker established the German Buddhist Community in Utting am Ammersee. Besides German Buddhists, many French Buddhists also attended George Grimm's lectures and seminars on Buddhism. George Grimm wrote eight books on Buddhism and wrote many articles in different periodicals. One of the world's experts in tuberculosis proclaimed himself a Buddhist after having read George Grimm's books. George Grimm felt deeply grateful to everyone who had given him knowledge about Buddhism. Over his bed hung Arthur Schopenhauer's portrait decorated with a fresh garland. He often praised the virtues of K.E. Neumann and Dr. Paul Deussen who had helped him with his Buddhist education.

Sigmund Feniger was another German who ordained as a monk in Sri Lanka in 2479 B.E. His ordained name was Nyanaponika. He was the student of Venerable Nyanasatta Maha Thera. He founded the Buddhist Study Circle and a public Buddhist library in Königsberg. He joined the Chatthama Buddhist Council in Burma during the time when U Nu was Prime Minister. He was named one of the Vice-Presidents of the World Fellowship of Buddhists. He also founded the Buddhist Books Publishing Society in Kandy, Sri Lanka and worked as its editor-in-chief. The society published books, pamphlets, translations of Theravada Buddhism Scriptures, and every type of documents concerning Buddhism. The one million volumes of printed matter were distributed to seventy countries worldwide.

Other Buddhist scholars in Germany played a key role in spreading Buddhism. These included Hermann Oldenburg, the son of a Protestant minister. He was the first person to make Theragatha and Therigatha known to Europeans. Dr. Paul Dahlke was an exceptional Buddhist who observed the Five Precepts immaculately. Wilhelm Geiger translated the Mahavongse texts. His work, which was published during 2451 – 2473 B.E., is considered a superb piece of work in critical philology. Maya Keller Grimm wrote the book "Questions and Answers about Buddhism". Her deep faith in Buddhism had been cultivated since she was young. It is said that tears would roll down her face each time she read the Mahaparinibbana Sutta because she felt such deep sadness about the passing of the Lord Buddha.

Zen Buddhism entered Germany after Dr. D. T. Suzuki had made Zen Buddhism widely known to the West. Professor Eugen Herrigel helped to make Zen Buddhism better known to Germans and Westerners through his book, "Zen in the Art of Archery". This book had been on the bestseller list for a total of forty years. It began with Herrigel's travel to teach philosophy in Japan for six years from 2467 to 2472 B.E. At the same time, he was also studying and practicing Zen Buddhism. Upon his return to Germany, he wrote about his knowledge of Zen Buddhism in one of the periodicals in Germany. Later, the articles were compiled into a book and the book was translated into different languages in 2496 B.E. During 2503 to 2513 B.E., Zen Buddhism was being widely practiced in Germany.³⁴

³⁴ Agganyani (Christa Benteinrieder) (2545 B.E.) The Prospects for the Growth of Buddhism in Germany and other Western Countries

In 2505 B.E., the Soga Gakkai International group or SGI from Japan began to spread their teachings in Germany. The Japanese SGI members that went to Germany to begin this work encountered many problems as a result of local cultures and religion. Today, however there are many SGI members in Germany.

Tibetan Buddhism has been popular among the German people since 2523 – 2533 B.E. It has centers throughout different cities. The Kagyu School's Diamond Way has as many as 126 centers.³⁵ Many other Mahayana Schools are also present in Germany. During May 28 – 30, 2546 B.E., the Dalai Lama went to perform religious ceremonies in Germany. Each town that the Dalai Lama visited, an overwhelming number of German people showed up to welcome him and listen to his lectures. In Berlin, 18,000 people showed up and in Munich, 10,000 people showed up.³⁶

³⁵ Diamond Way Buddhism Worldwide (2549 B.E.) Diamond Way Buddhism Center List: Germany

³⁶ Tibet Net Homepage (2546 B.E.) His Holiness the Dalai Lama Visits Germany.

6.2.3 Russia

Russia's official name is the Russian Federation. It is one of the 15 countries that once made up the Soviet Union. With the fall of the Soviet Union in 2534 B.E., the Russian Federation became the largest country in the world. It is divided into seven federation districts: central federation, southern federation, northwest federation, far-east federation, Siberia federation, Urals federation, and Volga federation. It has a population of 142,893,540 (as of 2549 B.E.); most of the Russians are Christians and Moslems.

Buddhists make up 0.5% of the population or around 700,000 people. Most of them are Vajrayana Buddhists.³⁷ Buddhism entered Siberia the first time when Asoka the Great sent Dhamma envoys to propagate Buddhism³⁸ outside his kingdom between 276 and 312 B.E. The Soviet Union's geological research data found clear evidences that there had been cultural exchanges between the people in Central Asia and India since the times of the ancient civilization Mohenjo-daro and Harappa. Russian literature made mentions of Indian cultures and traditions and in the eyes of the Russians, India was a prosperous land filled with clever and ingenious people as well as a great number of wondrous things...³⁹

Buddhism entered Russia again in 1766 B.E. when Russia was under the rule of Genghis Khan. Some Mongols were adherents of Buddhism and others were adherents of Tengri (deities worship) but Genghis Khan allowed his subjects freedom of religion. And members of the royal household subscribed to different religions.⁴⁰ In the middle of the 17th century or around 2193 B.E., Lamas from Mongolia and Tibet went to spread Buddhism along the eastern shore of Baikal Lake in the south of the Siberian federation. Soon afterward, the people in Tuva and Buryatia converted to Buddhism. As a result, several Buddhist societies were founded and Buddhist temples were built. Moreover, a number of Chinese people emigrated into Kalmykia located to the south of Siberia, and they brought Buddhism with them.

The growth of Buddhism in Russia was gradual and in 2347 B.E., Moscow State University, Kazan Technical State University, and Karkov University started the Eastern languages department. The first dean of Karkov University was I. Rizhsky. He placed a great deal of importance on the Sanskrit language, one of the languages used in Buddhist Scriptures. S. Uvarov, President of the Academy of Science said of the East that it is the birthplace of world cultures. It is the birthplace of every religion, every art and science, and every branch of philosophy.⁴¹

³⁷ Wikipedia (2549 B.E.) Religion in the Soviet Union

³⁸ Wikipedia (2549 B.E.) Buddhism in Russia

³⁹ Colonel Nuam Sa-nguansup, **Western Buddhist Philosophers**, vol. 2, p. 120

⁴⁰ Tuay Toon (2549 B.E.) Why is Genghis Khan Considered by the World to be the Person of the Millenium? (online)

⁴¹ Colonel Nuam Sa-nguansup, **Western Buddhist Philosophers**, vol. 2, p. 123

In 2417 B.E., the first Russian Indologist Ivan Minayev, who is considered the father of Eastern Literature and Buddhist Studies in Russia, went to Sri Lanka, India, and Nepal. He had gone to these countries in order to study different eastern religions such as Buddhism, Zen, and Hinduism. His travel journals were compiled into a book called “Studies of Ceylon and India from the Travel Notes of a Russian”. In 2421 B.E., Ivan Minayev went to Burma. He found that valuable Buddhist texts were lying neglected in the temples, in libraries, and in people’s homes...He gathered up many texts and brought them back to Russia. What alarmed him was the fact that at the time there was no scriptural study at all in Burma. Buddhist scholars found Minayev’s genius in the Pali language exciting and amazing.

Indology and Buddhist studies in Russia during this period reached a high point, and it was developed to the highest point by Minayev’s disciple, Fyodor Scherbatskoy. Scherbatskoy’s works received wide recognition and they have been reprinted repeatedly. One of his notable works recognized internationally include the book “Theory of Knowledge and Logic According to Later Buddhists.” It was printed in 2446 B.E.

In 2460 B.E., and during the reign of Tsar Nicolas II, there was a huge change in Russian politics. The Bolshevik Party led by Vladimir Lenin staged a revolution, abolished the monarchy, and formed the Communist government. After the revolution, Buddhist temples and societies had to close down. The army used the temple for its office, and many Buddhist structures were damaged. Buddha Images and Buddhist texts were destroyed. Russian soldiers tore the pages out of the Buddhist texts and used them as cigarette paper.⁴²

The condition of Buddhism during the revolution was quite bad but things did improve later on. In 2461 B.E., Serge Oldenburg, another leading Buddhist scholar and another disciple of Ivan Minayev went to see Lenin. As a result of the meeting, Lenin allowed Oldenburg to establish the Etymology and History Department for the Russian government. As a result, Buddhist research could be carried out smoothly. In August, 2462 B.E., Russia put on the world’s largest Buddhist heritage festival in the city of Petrograd. There were displays of Buddhist art, Buddhist texts, and the daily life of Buddhists in different countries such as China, Japan, Tibet, Mongolia, and Sri Lanka. No countries in the world Thailand included had ever put on such a grand festival before. Several important Buddhist scholars had been invited to give Dhamma lectures during the festival. Serge Oldenburg himself gave a lecture on the History of the Lord Buddha, the Great Master of Life.

⁴² Igor Troyanovsky (2534 B.E.) Buddhism in Russia (on line)

Vladimir Lenin died in 2466 B.E. and he was succeeded by Joseph Stalin. Under Stalin, Buddhism and other religions began to suffer. In 2473 B.E., Buddhist temples were ordered to close down. About 1,000 Lamas were persecuted. Stalin ruled the country by using the Commune System in that personal possessions were not allowed and everything including every citizen belonged to the Communist Party. He also employed the method of collective farming or forced collectivization which caused millions to starve to death. In Ukraine alone, five million people died from starvation. Those who were against this policy were sent to concentration camps and around ten million people died as a result. Stalin killed every person who opposed him. He said, “Death is the solution to every problem. Therefore, no people equals no problem.” When Russia entered WWII in 2484 – 2488 B.E., it won the war at the cost of twenty million people and ten million soldiers.⁴³ This is the dark period for the Soviet Union.

For about sixty-two years starting from the time when Joseph Stalin came into power, every religion had been persecuted by the Communist Party especially Christianity and Islam. The government wanted to replace God with science. The Soviet Union was the first country to successfully launch a satellite into space. Sputnik-1 was launched into earth’s orbit on October 4, 2500 B.E. The advancement of science coupled with the government’s oppression of religion caused the number of non-religious Russians to increase and the effect persists until today. The 2545 B.E. survey showed that around 32% of the Russian population have no religion and do not believe in God.⁴⁴

Freedom of religion returned to Russia in 2528 B.E., during the time that Mikhail Gorbachev was in power. Religious activities returned after decades of inactivity. In 2533 B.E., the Soviet Union passed the bill of rights to give its citizens freedom of religion. Another important change in politics occurred in 2534 B.E., when Mikhail Gorbachev canceled the Communist Party and the Soviet Union was separated into 15 different countries. Russia changed its name to the Russian Federation. During this period, Buddhism grew. The 2534 B.E. Buddhist survey showed that there were around 300,000 Buddhists in the former Soviet Union. There were 432 Buddhist centers, 16 temples, and around 70 Lamas. Most Buddhists live in Siberia and Leningrad,⁴⁵ and these Buddhists have helped perpetuate Buddhism up to the present time.

⁴³ Wikipedia (2549 B.E.) Stalin

⁴⁴ All-Russia Center as referenced by Wikipedia (2549 B.E.) Atheism Studies and Statistics (online)

⁴⁵ Igor Troyanovsky (2534 B.E.) Buddhism in Russia (online)

6.2.4 France

France's official name is the French Republic. It has a population of 61,044,684. The 2546 B.E. survey showed that around 62% of the French people are Christians and 26% have no religion. According to Gallup International, only 15% of the French people attend church regularly. It means that most of the French people are non-practicing Christians. Today, there are around 334 Buddhist centers in France. Some of these are temples, and some are meditation centers. Buddhism in France is Mahayana Buddhism especially Tibetan and Zen.

Buddhism in France was started by Eugene Bernouf, an important writer of Eastern literature. He published the book about Buddhism called "Essai sur le Pali" in 2369 B.E. It can be said that Eugene Bernouf is the father of Buddhist literature study in Europe. Before his time, no Westerners knew or understood Pali or its importance. Eugene Bernouf studied Buddhist texts at B.H. Hodgson when he served as British Resident-General in Nepal. His best known work among the Europeans was about the history of Buddhism in India (Introduction a l'histoire du Bouddhisme Indien) which was published in 2387 B.E.

France also had the most important student of Buddhist art in the person of A. Foucher. He had written seven books on Buddhist art. The first one is called "Les Scenes Figurees de la legend de Bouddha". It was printed in Paris in 2439 B.E. In 2448 B.E., he wrote a book about Buddhist art during the Gupta Period called "L'art grecobouddhique du Gandhara". And in 2460 B.E. Foucher published the book called "The Beginnings of Buddhist Art and Other Essays" in London, U.K.

A famous French Buddhist in the past was Alexandra David-Neel. She was a person of great resolute, patience, and persistence. She had lived in Tibet for many years. She dressed like a Tibetan, ate Tibetan food, and lived simply the way the Tibetans did. She became an expert in the Tibetan language and Tibetan Buddhism. She said that if women were not forbidden to ordain, she would have become a Tibetan monk practicing the Dhamma in a Tibetan temple. She had written 15 books on Buddhism, 10 of them were in French, and 5 of them were in German. The names of some of her books included "Buddhism, Its Doctrines and Methods", "My journey to Lhasa, with Mystics and Magicians", "Tibetan Journey", etc. All of her books have been translated into Polish, Swedish, Czech, and Spanish. She wrote the article "Buddhism and Social Problems" in the July to September issue of the Buddhist Review Journal printed in London in 2453 B.E.⁴⁶

In 2472 B.E., the American nurse, Miss Constant Lounsbery founded the French Buddhist Society called "Les Amis du Bouddhisme" in order to propagate Theravada Buddhism in France. The pain and suffering she saw her patients go through prompted her to begin studying the Pali Buddhist texts and practicing meditation for several hours each day. She propagated Buddhism by teaching and writing articles and books about Buddhism. Her book "Buddhist Meditation" was widely read in Europe and the United States. The society put out a quarterly journal called "La Pensee Buddhique". It was unfortunate that this society ended its activities in December of 2512 B.E.

⁴⁶ Colonel Nuam Sa-nguansup, *Western Buddhist Philosophers*, vol. 2, p. 32 & 35

There were several French Buddhist scholars who dedicated their lives to the Buddhist Cause. One of these was Sylvian Lavi who was second to none when it came to Mahayana Buddhism. She had profound knowledge in Chinese, Tibetan, and Kuchean. Sylvian Lavi had put together several Buddhist texts such as Dhammapada, Satapancasatikasatotra (2355 B.E.), Le Nepal, etc. One of her disciples, Louis de la Vallee Poussin, was another important scholar in Mahayana Buddhism. He had also put together several Buddhist texts such as Pancakamma (2439 B.E.), Parasannapada (2446 – 2456 B.E.), Mahanitesa (2459 – 2460 B.E.), etc. Books on Buddhism has never been lacking in France due to the continuous Buddhist research carried out by France's leading educational institutions. Sorbonne University spends a great deal of money to fund Buddhist research. As a result, the general public in France is beginning to show an increased interest in Buddhism.

Today, one very famous person in France and the West is Thich Nhat Hanh, a Zen monk from Vietnam who lived in Plum Village in the south of France. He has dedicated his entire life to the promotion of such concepts as loving-kindness, compassion, and non-violence. He has applied the Buddhist Principles for the good of society until he was named "The Father of Engaged Buddhism". He has written more than 100 books and 1.5 million volumes have been printed and distributed worldwide. James Shaheen, the editor of the Buddhist journal "Tricycle", said that I don't think there is any western Buddhist who does not know the name Thich Nhat Hanh.⁴⁷

Thich Nhat Hanh built the meditation center in Plum Village in 2525 B.E. Today, around 150 monks live there. A large number of nuns and people who love to practice the Dhamma also stay there. Each summer, the center offers a meditation program attended by about 1,000 people, 500 of whom are Vietnamese and the rest are Westerners. Thich Nhat Hanh also has many branches all throughout the western world.

What stands out in Thich Nhat Hanh's teaching and writing is the fact that meditation can be practiced any time and inner peace can be created anywhere not just in a temple or a special place. He makes the Dhamma easy to understand. He is of the opinion that the Five Precepts are very old and need to be re-phrased so that people today can understand them. He says that young people in the west do not like to be told not to do this or not to do that so he says instead that the Precepts are for one's own protection and the protection of one's loved ones as well as everyone in society. This is the reason why he says compassion is the first Precept. He uses the same technique to explain the other four Precepts.

He feels that people suffer because their lives are dominated by negative attitude and past mistakes. They do not get enough exposure to things that are positive and correct. He suggests that a person suffering from an illness should look inside himself and search for good things within him. Once he finds them, he should make them grow. When one wakes up in the morning, one should feel happy to be alive and have twenty-four more hours to learn new things and look upon other beings with eyes filled with compassion. If one realizes how one is still alive and has twenty-four hours to create new happiness, it should be enough to make one and the people around one happy.

⁴⁷ www.budpage.com (2548 B.E.) Thich Nhat Hanh Returns Home (online)

Thich Nhat Hanh enjoys practicing meditation. Although he is very busy, he still devotes as much time as possible to meditation practice. He said that I have plenty of time for myself. This is not easy to do, since by nature I do not like to disappoint anyone and it is difficult to decline invitations. But I have learnt about my limitations. And I learn to say no to people so that I can return to my ashram to do walking meditation, sitting meditation, gardening, being with flowers and other things. I have not used a telephone in twenty-five years. My schedule is free with no rules. Sometimes I think about the Catholic priest in the Netherlands who is always waiting by the phone. I asked him why he had to do this and he said that he has no right to stop communicating with his people. I told him in that case, you need an assistant. You cannot continue helping people if you do not look after yourself. Your peace, your freedom, and your happiness are important to other people. Therefore, it is very important to look after yourself.

In spreading Buddhism and practicing meditation, he emphasizes teamwork or Sangha. He said that creating the Sangha is extremely important, for if you live without the Sangha, you will abandon meditation practice very quickly. It is our motto that without the Sangha, we would be like the tiger that abandoned the forest to live in the plain. It would eventually be killed by human beings. Therefore, building the Sangha community is the first thing that we must do. We often remind the participants about this during our meditation program. On the last day of the program we make time to build the Sangha community. We tell the participants that the first thing they should do after they return home is to build the Sangha so that they can continue to practice meditation together, walk together, and learn together. Otherwise, they will stop practicing meditation in a few weeks or a few months and they may not ever talk about it again.

6.2.5 Italy

Italy's official name is the Italian Republic. It has a population of 58,751,711 (as of 2549 B.E.). The majority of Italians are Roman Catholics (87.8%), 36.8% of these Roman Catholics practice the religion on their own and 30.8% attend church every Sunday.⁴⁸ This data shows that Italians are more religious than the people of other western countries. This may be due to the fact that Italy has been the center of Roman Catholicism with the State of Vatican City⁴⁹ located right at the center of the country. This proximity fosters closeness between the Italian people and Roman Catholicism. Today, there are about 110,000 Buddhists in Italy. There are around 110 Buddhist organizations; most of them (47) are Tantric Buddhism. There are thirty-seven Zen organizations⁵⁰ and fifteen Theravada organizations.⁵¹

The Italian people heard about Buddhism for the first time through Marco Polo's accounts when he traveled to China. Marco Polo lived in China for 16 years between 1271 and 1295 B.E. The Italian people did not believe his story about Buddhism and he was immediately put in jail. In prison, Marco Polo spent his time writing the book "Description of the World". It was about his travels as well as Buddhism in China. The book was published later and it had helped quite a few Westerners back then to know something about Buddhism.

As a result of Marco Polo's story, Pope Nicholas IV sent a Catholic priest, John of Montecorvino to investigate Buddhism in China. John lived in China for several years and sent letters telling the Pope about how the Chinese people worshipped the Buddha Image. He was later appointed Archbishop of Peking. After John died, a Franciscan priest called Odoric de Pordenone went to Peking to replace John in 1291 B.E. Catholic priests had been sent to China from time to time following this period. Their travels were of much interest to the people in Europe. The stories told in the book "Voyages" by the priest John Mandeville written in 1295 B.E. were the most popular. The first printing produced 300 copies and the book had been translated into every European language. It was reprinted twenty-two times from the year 1470 to the end of the 18th century.

Nothing much happened afterward until the time of Giuseppe de Lorenzo and Giuseppe Tucci. They were Italian Buddhist scholars and both had created many works. Lorenzo was born in Lago Negro, Italy in 1874 B.E. He was a famous geologist. Because of his interest in Buddhism, he had translated the philosophical works of Arthur Schopenhauer into Italian. He also collaborated with the German Buddhist scholar Karl Eugene Neumann in translating the Buddhist text "Majjhimnikaya" from Pali into Italian.

Professor Giuseppe Tucci was an expert in Tibetan Buddhism as well as the history of Buddhism. He was born in 1894 B.E. in Macerata, Italy. He was famous for publishing altogether 210 books. He was president of "Istituto Italiano Per il Medio Ed Estremo Oriente" and taught at the University of Rome.

⁴⁸ Wikipedia (2549 B.E.) Religion in Italy

⁴⁹ State of Vatican City is located in Rome, Italy. It is the residence of the Pope, the head of Roman Catholicism. Vatican City is an independent country. It is the smallest country in the world with an area of just 110 acres and a population of just 921 (as of 2548 B.E.). St Peter's Basilica is the center of Vatican City. The form of government is absolute elective monarchy and the Pope has absolute power. His term ends at his death. The current Pope is Pope Benedict XVI.

⁵⁰ <http://iriz.hanazono.ac.jp> (2549 B.E.) zen_centers (online)

⁵¹ www.buddhanet.net (2549 B.E.) Buddhist Directory (online)

In 2514 B.E., when Professor Giuseppe Tucci was seventy-seven years old, he went to Tibet to have a conversation with Tenzin Norgay who had climbed the summit of Mount Everest. Tenzin told him that from having surveyed the different territories of Tibet, he has found ancient Buddhist texts inscribed on tree-bark as old as 2,000 years. Professor Tucci believed the language to belong to Turkestan, the place where Buddhism used to flourish. He also believed that these texts had been brought to Tibet but he still could not find where the rest of the texts were being kept. Professor Tucci had continued with his search until he eventually found them at the Ghangar Temple. The texts he had been looking for were piled together along with other Buddhist texts and all of them were covered with thick dust. He wanted to buy them but the Lama would not sell them. The Lama said that knowledge is not for sale but I will give the texts to anyone who wants knowledge.

Tibetan monks have settled in Italy in order to propagate Tibetan Buddhism. One of these included Lama Geshe Jampa Gyatso. He taught at the Institute Lama Tzong Khapa in Pomaia. The institute was founded in 2519 B.E., and it plays a major role in spreading Buddhism in Italy. The Lama Gangchen World Peace Foundation was founded by Lama Gangchen in 2535 B.E. in Milan. Its slogan is, “Inner Peace Is the Best Foundation for World Peace”. He has opened many branches and today, there are around 100 branches worldwide. He also established a publishing facility in Milan in order to print books about Tibetan Buddhism. Around 23 books in different languages have been printed. Some books were printed in as many as eleven languages so that the people of different countries can have the opportunity to experience the wealth of wisdom contained in Tibetan Buddhism.

The most important person in causing people the world over, Italians included, to become interested in Tibetan Buddhism is the Dalai Lama. He has been to Italy at least nine times. At each visit, he was given a grand welcome by the leaders of Italy as well as the Pope. The Dalai Lama has had the opportunity to talk to many educators, businessmen, and reporters. His most recent visit was on October 6, 2549 B.E. During this visit, he had a conversation about religion with Pope Benedict XVI.

In 2544 B.E., the Dalai Lama went to give a lecture at the Institute Lama Tzong Khapa in Milan. The lecture was attended by more than 3,000 people from 22 countries including 150 Tibetans living in different countries in Europe. The lecture was translated into four different languages: Italian, German, Spanish, and English. The Dalai Lama’s appearance at each place drew the attention of many reporters. When he went to visit the leader of the Tuscany Region, Mr. Claudio Martini, on December 1, 2544 B.E. more than 80 reporters from different organizations were there. At times, he was invited to appear on television for a live interview broadcasted nationwide.

There are other Mahayana Schools besides Tibetan School that work to spread Mahayana Buddhism in Italy. The work of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) was started by two high school students Piero Borri and Marco Magrini. Their first exposure to Buddhism was through the songs sung by two Americans, Karl Potter and Marvin Smith, during one of their concerts.

Borri and Magrini began to learn about SGI and spread the information to their classmates. It turned out that more and more of his classmates were interested and in November, 2519 B.E., there was a meeting of the members in the village of Poppiano which is a small village near Florence. Sixty members attended this first meeting. The number of members continued to increase. In 2524 B.E., the leader of SGI, Saisaku Ikeda, went to visit Italy for a week. He motivated and inspired this group of students by spending several hours walking with them and talking to them as they strolled along the streets of Renaissance.

These young people have done much to propagate the teachings of SGI to adults and youths in Italy. They published a monthly journal called “The New Renaissance”. The first publication was out in 2525 B.E., and in 2543 B.E., 21,000 copies of the journal were printed. In 2541 B.E., SGI began putting on an exhibition called “Toward a Century of Humanity” in order to provide knowledge about Human Rights in Today’s World. The exhibition was held in different places such as Rome, Milan, Naples, Venice, etc. More than 80,000 Italians attended the exhibition.

SGI-Italy continued to grow in strength and in 2542 B.E., it joined hands with the Christian Society in collecting signatures to abolish the death penalty worldwide. In Florence alone, 180,000 signatures were collected and the number was 435,000 for the entire country. This work gave SGI the opportunity to propagate its teachings because members had to meet and talk to people from every walk of life. The number of members continued to rise. In 2543 B.E., there were 2,500 members in Florence and one of these members was Mayor Leonardo Dominici. He proclaimed that Florence has the basis for creating peace using the principles of Daisaku Ikeda, the leader of SGI.⁵²

There have been a fair number of Italian Theravada monks. One important Italian monk was Venerable U. Lokanatha Thera who ordained in Burma in 2468 B.E. After his ordination, he undertook Dhutanga by trekking to different Buddhist countries such as Thailand. Having gained sufficient knowledge of Buddhism, he returned to Italy to propagate Buddhism. His effort failed, however. He decided to undertake Dhutanga by trekking barefooted across Southern Europe and Asia Minor toward India. He arrived in Burma in 2471 B.E., and spent five years studying the Tripitaka, practicing meditation, and undertaking all thirteen Dhutanga practices. He did not consume meat and he did not lie down to sleep for 34 long years from 2475 to 2509 B.E. He led the Dhamma envoys from Buddhagaya to propagate Buddhism in Burma in 2476 B.E., in Thailand in 2482 B.E., and in Sri Lanka in 2483 B.E. The purpose was to urge the people of these countries to be more committed to Buddhism.

⁵² Tamiko Kaneda (2543 B.E.) SGI-Italy: A Youthful Movement (online)

6.2.6 The United States

The United States of America has a population of 300,080,997 (as of 2549 B.E.). The majority of Americans are Christians (76.7%); the rest (24.3%) subscribe to other religions or have no religion. The 2547 B.E. Pew Research Center found that 18.5% of the people (aged less than thirty = 12.5%, aged more than thirty = 6%) are non-religious. This comes to 55,514,984 people or one sixth of the population. This number is almost the same as the population in Thailand. Wikipedia data shows that in 2539 B.E., 1,000 American scientists were asked about God. The result was that 60.7% of these scientists said that they did not believe in God and this trend appeared to be increasing. In terms of Buddhism, the U.S. State Department's International Religious Freedom's report in 2547 B.E. stated that around 1% or 3,000,000 Americans were Buddhists.⁵³ Most of them were Zen and Tibetan Buddhists.

Americans showed an interest in Buddhism for the first time after the public debate at Panadura in Sri Lanka in 2416 B.E. between Venerable Migetatuwatte Gunananda Thera and a team of Christian priests led by David de Silva. The *Time of Ceylon's* headline said that Venerable Migetatuwatte Gunananda Thera singlehandedly won the debate against a team of leading Christian priests. Dr. James Martin Peebles printed and re-printed the debate in American newspapers. This event caused many Americans to become interested in Buddhism. One of these Americans was Colonel Henry Steele Olcott. In 2423 B.E., he and Mrs. H. P. Blavatsky traveled to Sri Lanka in order to dedicate their lives to the revival of Buddhism there.

Colonel Henry Steele Olcott wrote the book "Buddhist Catechism" which was published in the United States in 2424 B.E. The book did not generate much public interest, however. In 2436 B.E., a Sri Lankan called Anagarik Dhammapala attended the Parliament of Religions meeting, and began propagating Buddhism in Chicago. Some people showed an interest in Buddhism, most of them were Chinese and Japanese people. One American, C.T.S. Strauss, declared himself a Buddhist by taking the Threefold Refuge and pledging the Five Precepts in front of Anagarik Dhammapala in New York City. Strauss was the first American to have proclaimed himself a Buddhist. Anagarik Dhammapala's work had gained the financial support of the wealthy American lady, Mrs. Mary Mikahala Foster.

In 2434 B.E., the Eastern Literature Club was formed at Harvard University. In the same year, the club published its first book called "Mala Jataka". It is the story of one of our Lord Buddha's previous lives. Later, it published a large number of such Buddhist texts as "Buddhism Legends" which is the translation of the Commentary's Dhammapada. Other books included "The Buddha's Teachings", "Being the Sutta Nipata or Discourse-Collection", Venerable Buddhaghosacariya's *Visuddhimagga*, etc. The club's first editor, Professor Lanman said that the objective of the club is to introduce these incomparable teachings to westerners. Ingenious religious masters can teach us many things. These teachings are about goodwill toward others, goodwill between individuals and goodwill between countries. We are taught to train our mind by overcoming evil intentions, anxieties, worries, and work-related pressure. We are taught to lessen our wants to the level that suits us so that we can live simply and above all, to search for God through the penetration of Truth whether by reasoning or by faith...⁵⁴

⁵³ Wikipedia the free encyclopedia (2549 B.E.) Buddhism in the United States (online)

⁵⁴ Colonel Nuam Sa-nguansup, **Western Buddhist Philosophers**, vol. 2, p. 180

Rin Zai Zen Buddhism from Japan entered the United States for the first time in 2436 B.E. through Soyen Shaku. He had been invited by John Henry Barrows to attend the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. This was the same meeting attended by Anagarik Dhammapala. Soyen Shaku talked about the Law of Karma, non-violence, and harmony among religions. He also had the opportunity to talk to Dr. Paul Carus, an American Buddhist scholar. Dr. Carus asked Soyen Shaku to send an expert in Zen Buddhism who could speak fluent English to the United States to teach American people about Zen Buddhism. Upon his return, Soyen Shaku told his disciple Dr. D. T. Suzuki who was teaching at Tokyo University about Dr. Carus's request. Therefore, in 2440 B.E., Dr. Suzuki went to Illinois to work in collaboration with Dr. Carus. This was the time that Dr. Suzuki started translating Zen Buddhism texts and other texts for the western world. Most westerners know about Zen Buddhism because of Dr. Suzuki's work.

Although Dr. Paul Carus had been raised in a pious and orthodox Protestant home in Germany, he had always had a keen interest in Buddhism. His first book "The Gospel of Buddha" was published in 2437 B.E. The book sold very well and had been translated into many different languages. It had been used as a textbook for the Buddhist schools in Sri Lanka and Japan. Whenever Buddhism was attacked, Dr. Paul Carus would protect it with his life.

When Sir Monier Williams wrote a book attacking Buddhism and said that Buddha is worthless compared to Jesus who is the light of the world. Dr. Carus responded by saying that Sir Monier's book is a poor quality book because it has tried again and again to devalue Buddhism. He said that at least, the Buddha is one of the Great Masters who met with the highest success...I also believe now more than ever that our Christianity can become a truly scientific religion, a universally important religion complete with logic if it can transform itself to be more like Buddhism.⁵⁵

Besides the Zen monks from Japan, western Zen monks also played an important role in propagating Zen Buddhism in the West. One example was the English monk, Ernest Shinkaru Hunt who ordained in Japan in 2467 B.E. He founded the International Buddhist Institute of Hawaii in Hawaii in 2475 B.E. He also founded the Western Buddhist Order to ensure that the work for the Buddhist Cause proceeded in the same direction. Venerable Sinkaru was the first western monk to be given the monastic title of Dai-oshō. He was well-respected by the monks from every Buddhist school.

In 2475 B.E., Dr. Dwight Goddard put together a very important book called "The Buddhist Bible". It is a compilation of the Lord Buddha's Teachings from Pali and Sanskrit texts as well as those written in Chinese, Tibetan, and Mongolian. This book is an excellent reference as the concise form of the Lord Buddha's Teachings. Dr. Goddard was confident that practicing the Lord Buddha's Teachings can heal all of the world's ills and he urged westerners to accept Buddhism as the guiding light in their life.

⁵⁵ Ibid, pages 190-192

There had been several Asian and western Zen teachers that propagated Buddhism in the United States. Robert Aitken was an American Zen teacher who founded “The Diamond Sangha” in Hawaii in 2502 B.E. and had opened many branches in the United States, Argentina, Germany, and Australia. The first Chinese Zen monk that came to propagate Buddhism in the United States was Hsuan Hua. He founded “The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association” or DRBA in California in 2502 B.E. as the center for teaching Chinese Zen Buddhism. He had also founded many other Zen organizations: The Gold Mountain Monastery, The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, etc.

A well-known Korean Zen monk in the United States was Sheng-yen. He traveled to the United States in 2513 B.E. and founded the Kwan Um School of Zen in 2515 B.E. Later, more than 100 branches of the school were opened in North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The heart of Sheng-yen’s teaching was group activities. Those who participated in the training had to eat together, work together, and practice meditation together.

Japanese Buddhists brought Zen Buddhism as well as Soka Gakkai to the United States. They formed the Soka Gakkai Organization in 2503 B.E. And within a span of less than 40 years, there were 71 branches with 330,000 members nationwide.⁵⁶

Tibetan Buddhism entered the United States after Zen Buddhism through the pioneering Lama, Geshe Ngawang Wangyal, a Gelug Lama. He went to the United States in 2498 B.E. and founded “The Lamaist Buddhist Monastery of America” in New Jersey in 2502 B.E. His disciples included several famous American academicians: Robert Thurman, Jeffrey Hopkins, and Alexander Berzin.

The current Dalai Lama went to the United States for the first time in 2522 B.E. and the most recent time in September 2546 B.E. He received a grand welcome from President George W. Bush. People know about and are interested in the Dalai Lama because his life story has been made into movies in 2540 B.E. The names of the movies are Kundun and Seven Years in Tibet. The famous Hollywood actor Brad Pitt starred in the latter movie. These two movies were about important events in Tibetan politics such as the time when Mao Zedong took control of Tibet in 2494 B.E., which caused the Dalai Lama to seek refuge in Dharamasala in northern India in 2502 B.E. This movie had quite an emotional impact on its audiences. But more importantly, it had a negative impact on China. As a result, the Chinese government barred the famous producer, Martin Scorsese, and the famous actor Brad Pitt from entering China.

In 2504 B.E., the ambassadors of eight Asian countries: Burma, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, India, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Taiwan, and Japan met together and decided to build together a Buddhist temple in the United States. This decision was a show of strength and harmony among different Buddhists countries, and demonstrated that all Buddhists are the Lord Buddha’s children.

⁵⁶ SGI (2549 B.E.) The SGI organization in the United States (online)

In the same year, the University of Wisconsin's Department of Languages and Cultures of Asia offered a Ph.D. program in Buddhist Studies. It was the first university in the United States to offer such a program. In 2518 B.E., a Buddhist university was founded in California and it offered undergraduate level to Ph.D. level programs in Buddhist Studies. Since then many universities in the United States have offered courses in Buddhist Studies. And in 2539 B.E. there were about 15 universities that offered undergraduate to Ph.D. level programs in Buddhist Studies.⁵⁷ These universities include Harvard University, Princeton University, University of Chicago, University of Virginia, etc. Today, nearly every institution in the United States offers courses in Buddhist Studies.

Thai Buddhists in the United States founded "The Thai-American Buddhist Society" in Los Angeles, California in 2513 B.E. They invited three venerable monks from Thailand to stay for a while in Los Angeles. These venerable monks included Phrarajmoli (now Phrathepsobhon of Wat Phra Chetupon), Phravajiradhamsobhon (of Wat Vajiradhamsadhit), and Phramahasington (of Wat Phra Chetupon). Two years later, on May 19, 2515 B.E., the foundations were laid for the first Thai temple in the United States. This ceremony was presided over by Somdet Phravanarat (Punnasiri Maha Thera). Other construction ceremonies were held on October 29, 2525 B.E. Since then many Thai temples have been built in the United States. These included Wat Thai-Los Angeles in California, Wat Buddhavaram in Colorado, Wat Dhammaram in Illinois, Wat Thai-Washington D.C. in Maryland, etc.

⁵⁷ Robert Topmiller (2539 B.E.) Buddhism in American (online)

6.2.7 Australia

Australia's official name is the Commonwealth of Australia. It consists of six states and two self-governing districts. The first district is "The Australian Capital Territory". Its capital city as well as the government center is called Canberra. The second district is the Northern Territory with Darwin as its capital. The six states include the most populous state New South Wales with Sydney as its capital, Queensland with Brisbane as its capital, South Australia with Adelaide as its capital, Tasmania with Hobart as its capital, Western Australia with Perth as its capital, and Victoria with Melbourne as its capital.

Australia has a population of 20,555,300 (as of 2549 B.E.). The majority of Australians are Christians. But adherents of Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism are also present in a fair number. Australia allows freedom of religion. The 2544 B.E. religious survey showed that there were 357,813 Buddhists in Australia. And in 2549 B.E., there were altogether 412 Buddhist centers. Although the number of Buddhists in Australia is small but the rate of increase appears to be the highest judging from the following table.⁵⁸

Australian Capital Territory

Religion	2529 B.E.	2534 B.E.	2539 B.E.	2544 B.E.	%Population	%Increase
Christianity	11,381,900	12,465,644	12,582,764	12,764,341	68	1.5
Buddhism	80,387	139,847	199,812	357,813	1.9	79.1
Hinduism			67,279	95,473	0.5	41.9
Islam	109,500	147,507	200,885	281,578	1.54	0.2
Judaism	69,100	74,386	79,805	83,995	0.4	5.3

New South Wales

Religion	2529 B.E.	2534 B.E.	2539 B.E.	2544 B.E.	%Population	%Increase
Christianity			4,464,926	4,520,334	71.4	1
Buddhism	35,114	81,908	58,743	147,839	2.3	80.4
Hinduism			35,576	51,463	0.8	44.5
Islam	57,551	77,845	102,288	140,938	2.2	37.8
Judaism		29,641	32,652	34,597	0.5	5.3

⁵⁸ The Buddhist Council of New South Wales (2549 B.E.) Analysis of Religious Growth in Australia (online)

This research data shows that Buddhism has been experiencing the highest growth while the growth of Christianity is at 1.5%. It means that from 2529 to 2544 B.E., there had not been much change in the number of Christians in Australia even though the population growth increased annually. The data also shows that since 2529 B.E., more and more Australians were choosing religions other than Christianity. Therefore, it can be extrapolated that in the future the number of Buddhists in Australia will likely increase.

Initially Buddhists in Australia were Asians that came as migrant workers to different states starting in 2391 B.E. The first group is the Chinese people who brought Buddhism with them. These Chinese workers were employed to work in the gold fields of Victoria during the gold rush period. In 2399 B.E., the first temple was built in the south of Melbourne. This temple was a combination of Taoism, Confucianism, deities worship, astrology, etc., but its door was closed sometime later.

In 2410 B.E., different groups of Japanese Buddhists came to Australia. These were gymnasts and magicians and they congregated in the industrial area of Northern Australia. They brought with them Mahayana Buddhism. In 2413 B.E., Sri Lankan Buddhists came to Australia to work in the sugar cane fields in Queensland. They built a Theravada temple on Thursday Island. In 2525 B.E., 500 more Sri Lankans came to Australia and they planted two Bodhi trees which are still standing today.

Even westerners went to propagate Buddhism in Australia. Colonel Henry Steele Olcott came to Australia in 2434 B.E. and spent many months giving lectures on Buddhism. Since English was his native tongue and his understanding of Christian cultures was deep, his lectures generated a lot of interest. Colonel Olcott was instrumental in the founding of the Theosophical Society in Australia. Its chief aim is to spread Buddhist philosophy. One of the members of this society was Alfred Deakin. He was later to become Australia's Prime Minister for three consecutive terms. Deakin went to study Buddhism in India and Sri Lanka for a period of three months in 2433 B.E. He also published a book about his travels.

Initially, the spreading of Buddhism in Australia was done by householders. It was not until 2453 B.E. that the first Burmese monk went to Australia. Later, more and more Buddhist monks from different countries went to spread Buddhism in Australia. In 2481 B.E., Len Bullen formed the Students of Buddhism Group in Melbourne. In 2496 B.E., the Buddhism Society of Victoria was founded. Importantly, in 2501 B.E., the Buddhism Federation of Australia was founded. This federation grew very quickly and it opened several branches in Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland, and Victoria.

A Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka named Somaloka went to spread Buddhism in Australia, and in 2514 B.E., he founded the Buddhism Society of New South Wales with its office in Blue Mountains to the west of Sydney. This society has many branches. Thai Buddhists built the temple Wat Dhammarangsi with the cooperation of Buddhists from different countries. This temple was under the sponsorship of Mahamakut Buddhist University. It was the first temple in Australia to hold an exam in Dhamma education. It also held classes to teach Thai language, Thai arts and cultures, Thai dances, etc. Thai Buddhists have built several temples in Australia since then.

Nichiren School and Soka Gakkai School of Mahayana Buddhism began spreading their teachings in Australia in 2507 B.E. by Daisaku Ikeda, the current leader of SGI. He formed an SGI group in Melbourne starting with just six members. Today, there are around 270 SGI groups all over Australia; each group consists of about five to ten members.⁵⁹

The first Tibetan Lama went to Australia in 2517 B.E. In 2519 B.E., Lama Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden went around Australia and taught 1,000 Australians to attain happiness and peace according to Tibetan Buddhism. The current Dalai Lama went to Australia three times in 2525 B.E., 2535 B.E., and 2539 B.E. During each visit, he met with a large number of Buddhists and during his third visit, he met and had a photograph taken with John Howard, Australia's Prime Minister. According to the website: www.buddhanet.net, there are altogether 107 Tibetan Buddhism centers in Australia.

⁵⁹ Colonel Nuam Sa-nguansup, **Western Buddhist Philosophers**, vol. 2, p. 190-192

6.3 The Reason Some Westerners Convert to Buddhism

During the period of Colonialism, westerners came to Asia to trade, expand their political and economic powers as well as spreading Christianity. But in the process some of them had the opportunity to experience Buddhism and its logic which was more in line with advancements in science being made in the West at the time. These individuals were so impressed with Buddhism that they began to study Buddhism in earnest, and they became instrumental in spreading Buddhism in the West. In addition, during the 24th and 25th century B.E., several countries in Asia had sent Dhamma envoys to spread Buddhism in Europe, America, and Oceania. Therefore, quite a number of westerners are now interested in Buddhism especially Mahayana Buddhism and the number is likely to continue to increase in the future. Unconditional faith in God is no longer a popular concept, and a large number of Europeans and Americans do not believe in God. Many feel that if God is truly omnipotent, He would not have allowed such tragedies as the one which happened on September 11, 2544 B.E. to occur. Today, many westerners are non-religious. When some of them find the Lord Buddha's Teachings, which challenge them to personally prove the teachings, they cannot help but fall in love with Buddhism.

Albert Einstein had the following to say about Buddhism, "Buddhism has the characteristics of what would be expected in a cosmic religion for the future: It transcends a personal God, avoids dogmas and theology; it covers both the natural and spiritual; and it is based on a religious sense aspiring from the experience of all things, natural and spiritual as a meaningful unity. If there is any religion that would cope with modern scientific needs, it would be Buddhism".

Moreover, Buddhism teaches non-violence as seen in the Ovadapatimokkha Lecture given to the Arahats by the Lord Buddha. True Buddhists have never come together to fight against others even when their lives are being threatened.⁶⁰ In times of danger, Buddhists resort to patience. In contrast, other religions have gone to war for the sake of their religious ideal. One such war is the Crusade War⁶¹ which was fought by the Christians and the Moslems for nearly 200 years from 1639 to 1834 B.E.⁶² By contrast, Buddhism is about logic. It is about cause and effect. It is not about blind faith. And it does not employ coercion. It is for these reasons that Buddhism is being more and more widely accepted by westerners.

⁶⁰ In the cases of Japanese, Korean, and Chinese monks who carried weapons or went out to fight in the civil war, they are not considered true Buddhists and their acts could not tarnish Buddhism's image.

⁶¹ Crusade means the cross.

⁶² Thairath (2548 B.E.) The Crusade War (online)

The Number of Atheists in Each of the Western Countries⁶³

Country	Population	%Atheists	No. of Atheists and Agnostics
	2547 B.E.	2548 B.E.	
Russia	143,782,000	24-48	34,507,680 - 69,015,360
Germany	82,425,000	41-49	33,734,250 - 40,388,250
France	60,424,000	43-54	25,982,320 - 32,628,960
U.S.A.	293,028,000	3-9	8,790,840 - 26,822,520
UK	60,271,000	31-44	18,684,010 - 26,519,240
Canada	32,508,000	19-30	6,176,520 - 9,752,400
Spain	40,281,000	15-24	6,042,150 - 9,667,440
Ukraine	47,732,000	220	9,546,000
Italy	58,057,000	6-15	3,483,420 - 8,708,550
Sweden	8,986,000	46-85	4,133,560 - 7,638,100
The Netherlands	16,318,000	39-44	6,364,020 - 7,179,920
Czechoslovakia	10,246,100	54-61	5,328,946 - 6,250,121
Australia	19,913,000	24-25	4,779,120 - 4,978,250
Hungary	10,032,000	32-46	3,210,240 - 4,614,720
Belgium	10,348,000	42-43	4,346,160 - 4,449,640
Total/% average	894,351,100	29-38	175,169,630 - 258,613,471

⁶³ Phil Zuckerman (2548 B.E.) "Atheism: Contemporary Rates and Patterns", a chapter in The Cambridge Companion to Atheism, ed. by Michael Martin, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK as referenced by www.adherents.com (2005) The Largest Atheist/Agnostic Populations (online)

ASSIGNMENTS

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of the History of Buddhism

7.2 Summary of Important Events in the History of Buddhism

CONCEPTS

Buddhism came into existence over 2,500 years ago with the Self-Enlightenment of the Lord Buddha. The Lord Buddha was the reason a large number of Indians in His days converted to Buddhism. These people were once adherents of Brahmanism, a religion which had been in existence thousands of years earlier. The happening of the Lord Buddha was a monumental event in the history of India and the world. Buddhism has since spread to the rest of Asia and the West.

At one point in India, Buddhists began to put a much greater emphasis on Dhamma education rather than meditation practice. And without the benefit of the supernatural insight gained through meditation practice, discord about the Dhamma-Vinaya began to surface and grow in intensity until Buddhism was divided into many different schools. Internal divisiveness coupled with external harm wrought by Hinduism and Islam eventually caused Buddhism to disappear from India.

Buddhism might have disappeared from India but not from the rest of the world, thanks to the effort of the nine groups of Dhamma envoys sent to propagate Buddhism in different lands by Asoka the Great. In the end, it is the Buddhists of these other countries that have gone to help revive Buddhism in India.

From studying the history of Buddhism, we learn that two crucial factors are instrumental to the protection and preservation of Buddhism.

1. Every Buddhist must be a practicing Buddhist in that every Buddhist must study the Dhamma and practice the Dhamma in his daily life.
2. Buddhists must act when Buddhism is under threat. Most importantly, members of the Four Buddhist Communities must actively help spread Buddhism to every corner of the world. Had it not been for the effort of the nine groups of Dhamma envoys during the reign of Asoka the Great, Buddhism might not have been around today.

OBJECTIVES

To enable the student to gain an overview of the history of Buddhism from the time of its happening up to the present time and learn about the factors that cause its growth and decline. The student can then understand how Buddhists can best protect and preserve Buddhism so that it can be around for a very long time. A table of important events in the history of Buddhism is also provided in this chapter.

CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of the History of Buddhism

The happening of the Lord Buddha over 2,500 years ago was a monumental event for the history of India and the world. Buddhism had brought about a radical change in Indian beliefs and cultures. A large number of Indians belonging to the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Shudra castes abandoned their thousands years old beliefs and converted to Buddhism. Buddhism had flourished for a very long time after the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana especially during the reign of Asoka the Great. This period is considered to be Buddhism's golden age. Asoka the Great had sent nine groups of Dhamma envoys out to teach Buddhism in different countries. Buddhism was propagated far and wide as a result of this effort.

The Lord Buddha's Teachings are meant to be followed and practiced so that supernormal insight can be gained and different stages of Enlightenment can be attained. However, once members of the Buddhist Communities¹ in India chose to emphasize the knowledge gained from thinking rather than the knowledge gained from supernormal insight through meditation practice, this led to a lack of true knowledge about the Dhamma-Vinaya. As a result of the differences in individual reasoning and experiences, these Buddhists began to form different opinions about the Dhamma-Vinaya. These differences eventually caused divisiveness to occur among the Buddhist Communities and Buddhism was split into different schools. Divisiveness was the cause of weakness for Buddhism. Weakness from within coupled with the harm wrought by Hinduism and Islam caused Buddhism to eventually disappear from India about 1,700 years after the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana.

Due to Asoka the Great's nine Dhamma envoys, Buddhism might have disappeared from India but it was flourishing in other parts of the world. Theravada Buddhism was flourishing in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, and Laos whereas Mahayana Buddhism was flourishing in China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, etc. In times, it was the Buddhists in these countries that have returned to revive Buddhism in India. Today, the number of Buddhists in India is increasing. Moreover, when Buddhism in any country is under threat, Buddhists in other countries are ready to help protect it. From studying the history of Buddhism, we find that two important factors are needed to ensure the stability of Buddhism.

1. Buddhists must be practicing Buddhists

It is every Buddhist's duty to have a thorough knowledge of the Lord Buddha's Teachings so that he can apply them in his daily life. Most importantly, every Buddhist must practice meditation so earnestly as to gain supernormal insight and attain the different stages of Enlightenment. Through these two simultaneous practices, every Buddhist can gain the correct understanding about the Dhamma-Vinaya and learn to be devout Buddhists. In this way, the Buddhist Communities can remain strong and even when Buddhism comes under threat; nothing can happen to it because they are ready to defend Buddhism with their lives.

¹ In the past, the Four Buddhist Communities include Bhikkus, Bhikkunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas. Today, they mean Bhikkus, Samaneras (novice monks), Upasakas, and Upasikas.

2. Buddhists must act when Buddhism is under threat

Buddhists must adhere to the saying, “Exercise equanimity when it comes to personal matters but put equanimity aside when it comes to matters concerning Buddhism.” In other words, Buddhists must do all they can to protect and preserve Buddhism. Moreover, they must help propagate Buddhism to every corner of the world. This is the lesson learnt from Asoka the Great’s nine Dhamma envoys. The efforts to propagate Buddhism and remove any threat to Buddhism must be made by every member of the Four Buddhist Communities if Buddhism is to last for as long as possible.

7.2 Summary of Important Events in the History of Buddhism

The information presented below was garnered from the website www.buddhanet.net. Most Buddhists especially those in Thailand believe that the Lord Buddha had lived between 623 and 543 B.C.E.² and that to convert the Buddhist Era (B.E.) into the Christian Era, one needs to subtract 543 from the Buddhist Era. For example, 2550 B.E. corresponds to the year 2007 in Christian Era. In reality, our Lord Buddha had lived between 565 and 485 B.C.E. and the correct current Buddhist Era should be 2492 rather than 2550. There is a discrepancy of 58 years. In other words, the Buddhist Era used in Thailand is 58 years ahead of the real Buddhist Era.

This discrepancy results from the accounting method used in Sri Lanka which took place around 1,000 years after the Lord Buddha’s attainment of Complete Nibbana. They based their accounting on the recorded texts about the history of Sri Lanka and the history of Buddhism based on Lankavongsa and Mahavongsa. The Sri Lankan Buddhist Era has also been used in Burma and Thailand.

The fifty-eight years difference results from the inaccuracy in the recorded history during the period when Sri Lanka was attacked by the Tamils of India with the ensuing civil war. The recorded history of Sri Lanka can be cross-checked with the Pali texts such as Samantapasadika, the Commentary’s Vinaya, and the Kathavatthu Text of the Abhidhampitaka. It was stated in these texts that Asoka the Great ascended the throne 218 years after the Lord Buddha’s attainment of Complete Nibbana. This corresponds to 267 B.C.E.

It means that the year the Lord Buddha attained Complete Nibbana was 485 B.C.E. (218 + 267). Therefore, the year 2007 corresponds to 2492 B.E. (2007 + 485). To avoid confusion that may arise, these important events in Buddhism will be given in Christian Era and the Buddhist Era will be given in parentheses.

The Buddhist Era for some of the events may differ slightly from one source to another, since all of the information has to be garnered from different sources. The aim here is to provide the student with an approximate timeline, since the time of some events could not be accurately pinpointed. What is more important here is the event rather than the exact date of the event.

² B.C.E. means before common era or before the Christian Era

Year	Important Events in Buddhism	Events in the World
600 B.C.E.	<p>*The Lord Buddha's birth, attainment of Self-Enlightenment and Nibbana, 565-485 B.C.E.</p> <p>Note: 623-543 B.E. is often used.</p>	<p>*The founding of Persia by Cyrus the Great, 550 B.C.E.</p> <p>*Confucius, 551-479 B.C.E.</p> <p>*The birth of Mahavira of Jainism, 550 B.C.E.</p>
500 B.C.E.	<p>*The First Sangiti was held in Rajagarh in 485 B.C.E. (1 B.E.) three months after the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana. The event was sponsored by King Ajatasattu.</p> <p>*During the Sangiti, the Dhamma-Vinaya was arranged into categories as they appear now; these were passed down through oral transmission.</p>	<p>*The Marathon War, 469-399 B.C.E.</p> <p>*The Greek-Persian War, 490-479 B.C.E</p> <p>*Socrates, 469-399 B.C.E.</p> <p>*Plato, 427-347 B.C.E.</p>
400 B.C.E.	<p>*The Second Sangiti was held in Vesali about 100 years after the Lord Buddha's attainment of Complete Nibbana, (100 B.E.)</p> <p>*The first division among the Sangha occurred; the Mahasanghika group was dissatisfied with the First Sangiti and held a separate Sangiti called Mahasangiti</p>	<p>*Aristotle, 384-322 B.C.E.</p> <p>*Alexander the Great 356-323 B.C.E. Attacked India in 327 B.C.E.</p>
300 B.C.E.	<p>*Asoka the Great ruled India (218-255 B.E.); he supported Buddhism; sent nine Dhamma envoys to different lands to propagate Buddhism.</p> <p>*The Third Sangiti was held (236 B.E.) in Pataliputra sponsored by Asoka the Great.</p> <p>*The completion of the Pali Tripitaka</p> <p>*Ven. Mahinda Thera established Buddhism in Sri Lanka (239 B.E.)</p>	<p>*Construction of the China Wall, 250 B.C.E.</p> <p>*Construction of the Hadrian Wall in the UK</p>

Year	Important Events in Buddhism	Events in the World
200 B.C.E.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *The birth of Mahayana Buddhism (286 B.E.) *The Paramita Sutta was written. *Dhamma envoys were sent from India to China (611 B.E.) during the reign of King Han Min Ti (601-608 B.E.) of the Han Dynasty; Buddhist texts were translated into Chinese. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Construction of the Sanchi Stupa and the Bodhigaya Cetiya in India. *The Han Dynasty in China (337-763 B.E.)
100 B.C.E.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Theravada Pali Scriptures were written down on palm leaves at Aloka Cave in Sri Lanka (451-454 B.E.) *Milindapanha: Dhamma Conversation between Phya Milinda and Ven.Nagasena 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *The beginning of the new calendar year by Julius Caesar of Rome Italy (01 B.C.E. Mar.1) *Julius Caesar, 100-44 B.C.E. *Virgil, the Latin poet 70-19 B.C.E.
1st Century (1-100 C.E.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *The Fourth Council was held in Calanda or Cashmere (643 B.E.) sponsored by Kanishka the Great (621-644 B.E.) *Buddhism was established in Cambodia (643 B.E.) and Vietnam (693 B.E.) *The Pundarika Sutta and other Mahayana Suttas were written. *Buddhism entered Central Asia and China 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Jesus, 0-33 C.E. * The destruction of Jerusalem, 70 C.E. *The first Buddha Image
2nd Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *The period of Indian Buddhist scholars Nagarajun (693 B.E.) founded the Madhayamika School. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *The height of the Roman Empire * 185 C.E. the Brahmin Sunga proclaimed himself as King. Pusayamitra and caused tremendous damage to Buddhism; his dynasty lasted for 112 years.
3rd Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Buddhism entered Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Indonesia. *Maitreyanatha founded the Yogacara School. *Buddhism was spread to Persia by a group of merchants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *The period of the three kingdoms; Wui, Jok, and Ngor; China received modern technologies from India, 220-265 C.E. *Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, 312 C.E.

Year	Important Events in Buddhism	Events in the World
4th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Famous teachers of Yogacara School: Asanga (853-933 B.E.) and Vasubandhu (963-1043 B.E.) *Formulation of Vajrayana in India. *Kumarajiva (887-956 B.E.) and Hui-Yuan (877-959 B.E.) translated Buddhist Scriptures into Chinese. *Buddhism entered Korea (915 B.E.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *The Gupta Dynasty, King Candaragupta II, ruled the northern part of Central India after his father's passing, 375-415 C.E. *Saint Augustine, 354-430 C.E.
5th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *The university for monks, Nalanda was built. *Ven. Buddhaghosacariya wrote the Visuddhimagga and other important parts of the Commentary in Sri Lanka. *Buddhism flourished in Burma and Korea. *The Chinese Monk Fa Hien went to India (942-957 B.E.) *The birth of Sukhavati School in China *Theravada Bhikkunis from Sri Lanka brought the proper way to ordain Bhikkunis to China (976 B.E.) *Mahayana Buddhism entered Java, Sumatra, Borneo through Indian immigrants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *The Colonialism Period. *The first hospital was built in Sri Lanka, 437 C.E. * The decline of the western Roman Empire, 476 C.E.
6th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Bodhidham went from India to China and founded the Zen School (1069 B.E.) *The Sui Dynasty in China (1132-1160 B.E.) *Development of the T'Jen-tai School, Hua-Hua-Yen School, The Sukhavati School, and the Zen School in China. *Buddhism entered Japan (1081 B.E.) Buddhism became China's state religion (1137 B.E.) *Buddhism flourished in Indonesia. *King Khusru translated the Jataka Stories into Persian (1074-1122 B.E.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Mohammed, Islamic prophet 570-632 C.E. *The growth of Islam, 630-725 C.E. *The first Cetiya in China was built.

Year	Important Events in Buddhism	Events in the World
7th Century	<p>*Potala Palace, Jokang Temple, and Tamoche Temple were built in Tibet (1184-1193 B.E.)</p> <p>*King Hashavardhana of North India (1149-1190 B.E.) was a Buddhist and sponsored the revival of Buddhism.</p> <p>*Ven. Tang Sum Jung traveled to India.</p>	<p>*The spread of Islam to North Africa, 700-800 C.E.</p> <p>*The Tang Dynasty in China 618-906 C.E.</p>
8th Century	<p>*The growth of six Buddhist schools in Japan which emphasized education: Jojisu, Kusha, Sanron, Hosso, Ritsu, and Kegun.</p> <p>*The great debate between Tibetan Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism.</p> <p>*Zen Buddhism entered Tibet.</p> <p>*The founding of Nyingma School in Tibet</p> <p>*Borobudur Temple was built in Java, Indonesia.</p> <p>*Jataka stories were translated into Syrian and Arabic called "Kalilag and Damnag"</p>	<p>*The Nara period in Japan, 710-784 C.E.</p> <p>*Sam-Ye Temple was built in Tibet, 749 C.E.</p> <p>*Moslem army invaded Central Asia, 760 C.E.</p>
9th Century	<p>*Angkor Wat was built</p> <p>*Saicho (1310-1365 B.E.) founded the Tendai School and Kukai (1317-1378 B.E.) founded the Shi-ngon School in Japan.</p> <p>*Buddhism in China was abolished (1388 B.E.)</p> <p>*The Lord Buddha's history was translated into Greek by Saint John of Damascus and spread among Christians under the name "Balaam And Josphat"</p>	<p>*The Heian period in Japan, 794-1185 C.E.</p> <p>*The Diamond Sutta was printed for the first time in China, 868 C.E.</p>
10th Century	<p>*The first Chinese Tripitaka was printed in 1526 B.E. called the Szechuan edition.</p> <p>*Buddhism entered Thailand (1443-1543 B.E.)</p> <p>*Islam replaced Buddhism in Central Asia (1443-1543 B.E.)</p>	<p>*The Song Dynasty in China, 960-1279 C.E.</p> <p>*In 1000 C.E., the world population was 200 million</p>

Year	Important Events in Buddhism	Events in the World
11th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *King Anawrahta (1587-1620 B.E.) of Pagan converted to Buddhism. *Atisha (1525-157 B.E.) traveled from India to spread Buddhism in Tibet (1585 B.E.) *Marpa (1555-1640 B.E.) founded The Kargyu School in Tibet. *Milarepa (1583-1666 B.E.) the greatest poet and the most famous Buddhist saint in Tibetan Buddhism *The end of Anuradhapura Bhikkus and Bhikkunis in Sri Lanka due to the invasion of South India. *The founding of Sakya School in Tibet *Revival of Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Burma *The decline of Buddhism in India 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Revival of Confucianism in China, 1000-1100 C.E. * Division of Christianity into Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholicism. *The First Crusade War, 1096-1099 C.E.
12th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Theravada Buddhism was established in Burma *Honen (1676-1755 B.E.) founded the Sukhavati School in Japan. *Eisai (1684-1758 B.E.) founded the Rinsai Zen in Japan. *Moslem army attacked Magadha in 1736 B.E. and destroyed temples and two Sangha Universities: Valabhi (Theravada) and Nalanda (Mahayana). *Buddhism flourished in Korea during the Koryo Dynasty (1683-1933 B.E.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Omar Khayyam, the Persian poet and mathematician, 1044-1123 C.E. *Bologna University was founded in Italy in 1119 C.E. *Paris University was founded in France in 1150 C.E. *The Kamakura period in Japan, 1192-1338 C.E.

Year	Important Events in Buddhism	Events in the World
13th Century	<p>*Shinran (1716-1806 B.E.) founded The Sukhavati School in Japan.</p> <p>*Dogen (1743-1796 B.E.) founded the Soto Zen School in Japan.</p> <p>*Ven. Nichiren (1765-1796 B.E.) founded the Nichiren School in Japan.</p> <p>*Mongolians converted to Vajrayana Buddhism</p> <p>*Theravada Buddhism entered Laos.</p> <p>*Buddhist Scriptures were translated into Arabic in Persia</p>	<p>*Francis of Assisi, 1181-1226 C.E., famous Christian saint</p> <p>*Genghis Khan invaded China, 1215 C.E.</p> <p>*Thomas Aquinas, 1225-1274 C.E., the foremost classical proponent of natural theology</p> <p>*The Mongols seized control of China, 1279 C.E.</p>
14th Century	<p>*Bu-ston collected and arranged Tibetan Tripitaka</p> <p>*The kings of Chiangmai and Sukhothai accepted Theravada Buddhism and made it the state religion in 1903 B.E.</p> <p>*Theravada Buddhism entered Laos and Cambodia.</p> <p>*Tsong-Kha-Pa (1900-1962 B.E.) founded the Gelugpa School or Yellow Hat in Tibet.</p>	<p>*John Wycliffe (1328-1384 C.E.), the scholastic theologian who translated the Bible into English.</p> <p>*China gained its independence from the Mongols during the Ming Dynasty, 1368 C.E.</p>
15th Century	<p>*Angkor Wat was built in Cambodia as a place to worship Vishnu (20th century B.E.); it later became the center of Buddhism.</p>	<p>*Printing press was developed in Europe.</p> <p>*Leonardo Da Vinci, 1452-1519 C.E.</p> <p>*Columbus discovered America, 1492 C.E.</p>
16th Century	<p>*The leader of Gelugpa School received the Dalai title for the first time from Altan Khan of the Mongols (2121 B.E.)</p> <p>*The fifth Dalai Lama met Emperor Shunzhi of China</p>	<p>*Shakespeare, 1564-1616 C.E.</p> <p>*Galileo, 1633-1642 C.E.</p>

Year	Important Events in Buddhism	Events in the World
17th Century	<p>*Buddhism in Japan was restricted by Shogun Tokugawa (2146-2410 B.E.).</p> <p>*Hakuin (2229-2312 B.E.), the writer and artist helped revive Rinzai Zen in Japan.</p>	<p>*Japan isolated itself from the world, 1639 C.E.</p> <p>*The Civil War in Great Britain, 1642 C.E.</p>
18th Century	<p>*Sri Lanka, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam became colonies of Western countries.</p> <p>*King Kirti Sri Rajasinha asked the Thai monks to help revive Buddhism in Sri Lanka</p>	<p>*The period of enlightenment and advancement in science and technology in Europe</p> <p>*The U.S. proclaimed its independence, 1776 C.E.</p> <p>*The French revolution, 1789-1802 C.E.</p>
19th Century	<p>*A new school in Buddhism was founded in Japan.</p> <p>*Aranvasi monks in Sri Lanka were re-ordained in Burma (2405 B.E.).</p> <p>*The Pundarika Sutta was translated into German. (2395 B.E.)</p> <p>*Neumann and Oldenburg pioneered academic work in Buddhism in Germany.</p> <p>*The first German Buddhist monk, Ven. Nyanatiloka.</p> <p>*The founding of the first Chinese temple in San Francisco, U.S.A. (2396 B.E.)</p> <p>*The Fifth Sangiti was held in Mandalay, Burma; and the Tripitaka was inscribed in 729 marble tablets (2411-2414 B.E.)</p>	<p>*The end of the Shogun rule and the ushering in of the Meiji Dynasty in Japan, 1868 C.E.</p> <p>*Slavery was abolished in the British Empire, 1833 C.E.</p> <p>*Civil War in the U.S. 1861-1865 C.E.</p>

Year	Important Events in Buddhism	Events in the World
20th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Buddhist Society was founded in UK (2450 B.E.) *The founding of society for the purpose of propagating Buddhism in Germany (2446 B.E.) *The Chinese Tripitaka, Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo edition was printed in Japan. *The Chinese government restricted Buddhism in Tibet (2493 B.E.) *The founding of World Fellowship of Buddhists in 2495 B.E. *The Sixth Sangiti in Ragoon, Burma (2497-2499 B.E.) *Celebrating the 25th century B.E. *The Dalai Lama fled to India (2502 B.E.) *Tibetan Buddhism entered the West. *The founding of the first Theravada temple in the U.S. (2509 B.E.) *The founding of the first Sakya School center in the U.S. (2514 B.E.) *Tibetan Buddhism texts were collected and printed (2503 B.E.) *His Holiness Dalai Lama received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2532 B.E. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Mahatma Gandhi, 1869-1948 C.E. *WWI, 1914-1918 C.E. *Russian Revolution, 1917-1922 *British scientist Ernest Rutherford succeeded in splitting atom for the first time, 1919 C.E. *WWII, 1939-1945 C.E. *Cultural Revolution in China, 1966 C.E. * The fall of Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, 1989 C.E. * Pope John Paul II forgave Galileo for spreading the theory about the sun being at the center of the universe which goes against Christian teachings.

ASSIGNMENTS

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook.